

THE POLITICS OF AGING IN FLORIDA:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE SILVER HAired LEGISLATURE

BY

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Acknowledging individuals' contributions to one's personal and professional development can be reminiscent of award banquets where honorees spend an inordinate amount of time thanking everyone with whom they have ever had contact. However, one infrequently has the occasion to give thanks publicly and, therefore, the opportunity should not be wasted. Many people have influenced my academic life but the following persons deserve special mention.

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During the last decade there has been a movement from issue-oriented, interest group-based activities on behalf of older persons to activities which encompass political awareness and involvement by the elderly themselves. The ability of the elderly to self-advocate has been debated conceptually; however, little empirical evidence has been offered to support opposing views. This dissertation reports research findings on the Silver Haired Legislature (SHL), a unique advocacy approach by the elderly in the state of Florida. The SHL concept is being researched for the first time.

A case study of the Silver Haired Legislature in Florida was completed utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods: interviews, questionnaires, participant observation, and content analyses. Data sources included state officials, Silver Haired Legislature participants, the 1980 Silver Haired Legislature session, official records, and the 1980 Florida State Legislature. Research results are given



which are used to analyze the processes and structure of the Silver Haired Legislature, determine the effectiveness of this self-advocacy mechanism, characterize the participants, and offer a theoretical framework entitled Experimental Learning Model to explain participation by these elderly.

The Silver Haired Legislature is defined as an opportunity structure, and, as such, challenges the present state of knowledge on the politics of the elderly. This self-advocacy system promotes homogeneity among the various segments of the elderly which expedites the consideration of their proposals by the Florida State Legislature. The Silver Haired Legislature is a more efficient procedure in which to compete for limited resources than are more traditional forms of advocacy. State legislators acknowledge that the Silver Haired Legislature is an effective advocacy group and that the political efficacy of the elderly is increased by the SHL process. Finally, the successful passage into law of SHL legislation demonstrates that the Silver Haired concept in Florida creates an acceptable environment for the elderly to advocate for themselves. Data from a national survey were employed to assess both the diffusion of the concept and a trend toward self-advocacy at the state level.



## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### Background

In principle, the United States of America's political system is equalitarian in nature. Theoretically, every person has equal influence; in practice, however, it does not always work this way. One reason for this difference is that citizens and various interest groups have unequal resources. As these resources are converted into political activity, inequality appears. Regardless of this reality, the citizens of the United States possess a full panoply of political rights necessary for political influence such as the right to vote, to form and work for political parties and organizations, to petition the government, and to stand for governmental office, as well as the concomitant rights of free speech, press, and assembly that make the former rights meaningful (Verba et al., 1978). Thus, the system contains a wide variety of political rights equally available to all citizens.

These political rights represent a potential for influence by individuals. Some citizens may choose to take advantage of these rights because they have the motivation and/or resources to do so; others must be encouraged by additional opportunities. If political participation depends on resources and motivation, then this advantage can be counterbalanced by the use of participatory opportunities.

The elderly in our society have not been viewed as an active political group. Any number of reasons can be given for this conclusion.



Large numbers of the elderly are a recent phenomenon, and their needs did not receive much public attention before the 1960s. Until recently, it was assumed that elderly persons were cared for in their own family networks. Assuming that the elderly were incapable of advocating their own interests, or that their interests were too diverse, has been a popular notion. In any case, support for advocate actions will not be forthcoming unless potential advocates find it attractive as well as promising. Images of the violent protestor, the striker, or the placard carrier will not appeal to most older persons. But advocacy as a form of political participation can be attractive to older persons if it is made appealing to them and if it offers an opportunity within the political system to be influential.

Various groups and movements in the past have involved large numbers of the elderly but have lacked political successes. These historical failures lead to the conclusion that many elderly persons would become politically active if they were provided the proper direction. According to Arnstein (1969:216), "the idea of citizen participation is like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you." Such an ideology, however, does not influence behavior. The means for increasing the political participation of the elderly and their advocacy of their own needs have been neglected in research.

Apparently, making an appeal on behalf of a cause has become sophisticated in almost every sector of our society except among the elderly. The equalization of opportunities for political activity coexists with inequalities in the use of such opportunities. To achieve equality in the use of participatory opportunities, greater government intervention may be needed. Group-based political activity can boost



the activity rates of individuals having little motivation and/or few resources.

Contemporary articles on the elderly frequently repeat popular conceptions without any serious attempt at systematic verification of their validity. Whereas the 1960s may be viewed as the period for acknowledgment of the elderly as an increasing population with specific needs and the 1970s as a period of efforts to fight ageism by many different age groups, the 1980s may be the period when the elderly begin to act as their own best advocates. Moreover, with the exception of a few studies discussed in Chapter II, most research and conclusions have concerned the elderly's political influence at the national level (Binstock, 1974; Estes, 1979; Hudson and Veley, 1974; Pratt, 1976). Most issues insofar as the elderly are concerned have been related to communities, cities, counties, substate districts, and states (Hess and Kerschner, 1978). Increasingly the political mood of the country is toward decentralizing the federal government and strengthening local and state governments. Even amendments to the Older Americans Act (OAA) passed in the mid-1970s have reflected this mood (Administration on Aging, 1979). The OAA provides mandates and monies to the states to develop advocacy programs in which the elderly represent themselves. These mandates and monies have encouraged the states to include various forms of advocacy programs in the state plans. Consequently, research is needed to explore these various types of advocacy programs. New advocacy programs are frequently created without sufficient understanding among the elderly or the decision makers of possible consequences. Possible consequences must be considered before



social-structural and institutional-level changes are made in an attempt to improve the quality of elderly persons' lives. Furthermore, prior research (Binstock, 1972; Cain, 1974; Hudson, 1974; Schmidhauser, 1968) has focused on advocacy issues such as influence, income, housing, and legality, and not on the advocate organization.

### Overview of the Study

Some elderly persons are becoming more aware of pertinent issues affecting them as a result of increasing media output, the growth of senior centers and other places for them to meet, the increasingly higher levels of education they have obtained, and the various organizational efforts made by and for them (Cross, 1979; Harris, 1975). A question to be explored in this study is how the elderly can advocate the issues affecting them.

This study focuses on one form of advocacy known as the Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) in Florida. The SHL is a mock legislative session conducted by the state to which older persons are elected to present, debate, and prioritize legislation. The SHL session is followed by its members' lobbying the SHL bills in the state legislature, with the goal of the bills' becoming state law. Florida was the second state to adopt the SHL concept, and a number of other states have followed suit or are considering its adoption. Since the SHL is a relatively new phenomenon, no scientific inquiry of the SHL has been conducted. Thus this exploratory case study is unique as well as being one of the few known studies of political advocacy by the aged at the state level.

The Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) offers the elderly the opportunity to come together in a single, physical location and in face-to-face



interaction. Thus, structured by the situation, the elderly talk together and explore their mutual interests and eventually seek a political recourse for their shared problems. The actual participatory behavior by the elderly, rather than their attitudes, is central to this investigation. An analysis of the SHL concept, in addition to a description of its structure and processes, explores the reasons for participation in it by the membership and its role in the political structure of state politics.

In short, this study demonstrates how individual resources and motivation give a participatory advantage to some of the elderly, and how this advantage is modified by the way organizations and community ties encourage individuals toward political activity. The results of these effects are realized with the pattern of affiliation that the SHL concept creates for the participants and in the political system. Essentially, it is argued that the opportunities offered by the SHL structure mobilize the elderly to advocate their own self-interests. Further analyses of the data allow for speculation of SHL's successes and its future role as an advocacy system.

Citizen activities can affect the behavior of governmental leaders in two ways. First, they can communicate information about the preferences of citizens. Second, they can apply pressure on political leaders to conform to these preferences. This research focuses directly on the first way and tangentially on the second. The concept of applied pressure is difficult to operationalize and the political potential is discussed more fully elsewhere (see Chapter II). Several researchers (Binstock, 1972; Carlie, 1969; Hudson and Binstock, 1976) concluded that



the political potential of the elderly will not likely increase.

Kasschau (1978) offered empirical data to challenge this conclusion.

In one of the few studies of decision makers' perspectives about the elderly, she surveyed over 300 decision makers. Kasschau (1978:345) concluded that

at a time when social gerontologists increasingly emphasize the heterogeneity in the life circumstances and philosophical outlook of elderly people, the cross section of the decision-making community interviewed in this study nearly unanimously (96 per cent) agreed that older persons share similar problems regardless of race, class, or other differences. Thus, in contrast to social and political analysts who often offer their observations as spectators to the policy process, these decision-making participants do believe that the essential objective conditions exist to underwrite an aged based political interest group movement among the elderly. That is, the aged do share common experiences, common interests, and common problems by virtue of their being old and, more important, that such common aging experiences span the differences created by sex, race, or social class distinctions. For these decision makers, the foundation for an age based interest group exist in the unavoidable realities of aging.

Preliminary investigation for this research, as well as the data collected, indicates a similar belief among Florida State lawmakers. Therefore, a fundamental assumption for this study is that decision makers perceive the existence of the necessary conditions for an aged-based interest group to develop its efficacy. Consequently, there is an inherent pressure on Florida's political leaders to recognize an advocacy organization by the elderly of the state. One state legislator, who wished to remain anonymous, said that "it was better to be conciliatory towards an established elderly advocacy group than to antagonize the general elderly population and have them become a hostile interest group."

Policy makers nationally may share this perception which is evidenced at the federal level. When scholars (Kreps, 1976; Schulz, 1980)



offer suggestions for changes in the benefit structure of Social Security, their arguments are frequently ignored by decision makers who wish to avoid negative publicity among the elderly. Interestingly, in the midst of national budget cuts and a national fervor for less government spending, the current administration, early in 1981, considered the major funding programs for the elderly as a special status and placed them on an untouchable, protective list. The president has mandated that Social Security reform shall not reduce benefits for those currently retired (Republican National Committee, 1981). It appears that whether the elderly have a strong political potential or not, they are construed to be a political threat.

These considerations make clear that a study of an advocacy system as a form of political participation cannot deal with the simple question of whether or not governmental officials are responsive to citizens, or even with the more complex question of how responsive they are. Responsiveness is not an either-or concept nor can it be placed on a simple scale with some leaders being more responsive than others. Rather one must consider the question of whose preferences the leaders respond to and, most important, the mechanism by which the leaders become aware of these preferences. Another important issue in this research is a description of the participants. Who are these senior citizens who attempt to shape the input of decision makers? This investigation also seeks to determine why some elderly persons participate in advocacy while others do not.

The limitations imposed on the dissertation process confine the study to the 1980 Silver Haired Legislature in Florida. Most of the



Silver Hairs serving in 1980, however, served in the 1979 SHL, and some served in the 1978 SHL. Thus, the analyses include pertinent information from earlier SHLs which demonstrate the development of the SHL concept. As in most gerontological research, this study is affected by recent period effects, whose changes in the political climate can greatly enhance or nullify the applicability of the results. In the examination of the SHL, the classical theory of democracy was accepted. The theory asserts that public policy should result from extensive, informed discussion and debate generated by the extension of general participation to the citizenry in decision making. The theory was emphasized by Lowi (1969) who stated that the well-being of individuals is in no small part dependent on the adequacy with which their personal interests are protected by some larger, organized advocacy group in the political bargaining process.

This investigation does not utilize any of the current dominant gerontological theories. Estes (1979:11) argued that these theories—relating to disengagement, activity, and life cycle—at best limit our understanding of the aging process; "at worse [they] negatively affect the development of public policies for the aged." Furthermore, the lack of attempts by researchers who study the politics of the elderly to utilize these theories lends support to Estes' conclusion. Thus, the data from this investigation can be considered as baseline information for the development of new explanations and foundations for a new theory for the politics of aging.

#### Relevance

The major objectives for this research are twofold: First, the research about the political role of the elderly raises several questions



discussed in the Review of the Literature chapter. This study addresses and clarifies several of the questions concerning the elderly's political role, which are enumerated on the final pages of Chapter II. Second, innovative structures and changing environments create fertile areas for research which will add to the understanding and theorizing about the aged. The history of advocacy for the aged has been characterized by groups, individuals, and leaders who have made known the plight of the elderly. As our social system has changed and the concerns of the elderly have become visible, new alternatives for advocacy by the elderly themselves have been sought. Preliminary research indicated that the SHL concept presented an innovation which represented an amalgam of former opportunities. Therefore, the second objective of this research is an analysis of the opportunity structure that the SHL concept represents in the relationship to political participation by the elderly.

A number of research methods were employed: observation of the SHL session; a survey of the 1980 Silver Haired Legislature utilizing a structured questionnaire; a survey of the legislators serving in the 1980 Florida State Legislature; interviews with Silver Hairs, observers, legislators, and state personnel responsible for the coordination and organization of the SHL; and a content analysis of available documentation and records. A survey of the directors of all 50 state offices on aging was conducted to assess the diffusion of the SHL concept throughout the United States.

### Sociological Significance

The sociology of aging has fostered research about the elderly that has been conducted in a wide variety of social contexts. Few



studies conducted by sociologists, however, have focused on the interplay of variables of an individual and a social system. The majority of sociological studies have utilized survey technology which is well developed and whose acceptance in practice is widespread. We are inclined to stay with what we do rather than venture into unfamiliar areas with inadequate tools. Survey research, however, often becomes a kind of aggregate social psychology, and, when it restricts itself to "enumerating individual characteristics, it treats the individual as if he were detached from his environment and hence as an abstraction" (Boudon, 1971:48).

Social phenomena are mediated through individual actors. Hence, sociological investigation must demonstrate how macrovariables affect individual behaviors. By macroanalysis we mean the investigation of phenomena which cannot be distributed among individuals (Carlsson, 1971). Macrophenomena correspond to Durkheim's (1938) concept of social facts which are external to individuals. Therefore, microanalysis often incorporates macrophenomena as constraints or incentives, and macrophenomena are generally intended or unintended results of aggregates of individual actors or of collective decisions. It is useful to identify characteristics of individual actors at the microlevel and properties of social systems at the macrolevel within a conceptualization that includes both as well as their relationships. It is this conceptualization which guides this sociological analysis. The primary goal was to identify and construct a model to explain a social structure that is a recent innovation in the sociology of aging.



Bennett (1970) stated that the elderly more than any other group may be sensitive to their social environment, and that researchers must analyze social environments in order to understand the elderly. Although this exploratory research draws upon work done in the related fields of psychology, economics, political science, and history, it is the orientation discussed in this section which makes this research primarily sociological. Furthermore, this study is an initial step toward the development of sociological theory which can be utilized to explain the behavior of the elderly.

#### Gerontological Importance

It is hoped that information from this study will contribute to an evaluation of the Silver Haired Legislature concept, will demonstrate the ability of the elderly to advocate on their own behalf, will describe an innovative strategy for political participation, and will expand present knowledge about the politics of the aged. The diffusion of the SHL concept, evidenced by the 50-state survey, should enhance the pertinent findings of this study and may have some impact on policy making and advocacy at the state level nationwide.

Results from the national survey of states in this study indicated that almost all states have begun or are planning an advocacy program for the elderly. (Nine states did not describe a program; no state responded without an interest in advocacy.) The Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended (Administration on Aging, 1979), specifically Title IV, Part C, Section 421, provides funding for statewide advocacy programs. Discussions with a sample of various state personnel involved with programs for the elderly cited the Older Americans Act (OAA) for



encouraging the interpretation by states that advocacy by the elderly was a mandate for the states to develop. In Florida, the Silver Haired Legislature was included as an objective in the state plan (1979, 1980, 1981). The state plan was submitted to the Administration on Aging as compliance for accepting OAA funds. Thus, a key focus of this research is to determine if the SHL concept can be a useful mechanism in the future of advocacy by the elderly.

This research also has a number of practical implications. It is apparent that SHLs are diffusing throughout our society and are in the process of becoming institutionalized. Since a considerable amount of the financial and in-kind support for SHLs comes from tax monies, it is relevant to study their concept systematically in order to offer some evidence for the continuance or withdrawal of public investments.

Indeed, a central question of this investigation is, Can the elderly advocate for themselves? Another question is, Which elderly persons are being represented and what are the characteristics of the representatives? The distinctive style of an organization's internal politics has direct consequences for its external political involvement and influence (Wilson, 1962). As a social policy question, it is important to determine both if and how the elderly are able to form organizations to articulate their political needs. This study of the Silver Haired Legislature's structure and processes may be of major relevance for gerontologists in that it may generate new conceptualizations about the politics of aging.



## CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction

Since the early 1960s and the overt attempt in the Kennedy campaign to woo the elderly's vote with the "Seniors for Kennedy" group, attention has been focused on the role of the elderly in American politics (Pratt, 1976). This practical concern of determining the voting potential of the elderly instigated a plethora of studies. Campbell (1971), Cutler and Schmidhauser (1975), and Glenn and Hefner (1972) challenged the assumptions of earlier thinkers who believed that the elderly would become more conservative, would shift to the Republican party, would be uninterested in politics, and/or would become nonvoters as they aged. As with other topics within the field of gerontology, the reevaluation of earlier assumptions intrigued other scholars and salient issues were raised. Voting and political interest patterns of the aged are only two forms of political participation. Glenn (1969) studied the political opinions held by age groups and Campbell (1971) researched commitment measured by political party involvement and attendance at political functions. The research showed that the aged are actively engaged in moderate forms of political participation and are underrepresented in more intensive forms (Hudson and Binstock, 1976). These intensive forms of political participation refer to the aged as an effective lobby or advocacy group. Since the 1971 White House



Conference on Aging, there has been a movement from issue-oriented, interest group-based activities on behalf of older persons to activities which encompass the political awareness and involvement by the elderly themselves (Pratt, 1976). Researchers have focused on developments in the national government as opposed to developments at state levels (Pratt, 1980). Estes (1979) concluded that the neglect of state-level analyses has produced a gap in knowledge of policy making about the elderly at the state level.

### Age-Based Interest Groups

Early interest groups such as the National Conference of Charities and Corrections and the Fraternal Order of Eagles advocated for the elderly and exhibited constructive views, but their efforts, which focused upon pension provisions or improved welfare plans for the elderly, were unorganized. These groups gained some notoriety during the 1920s but were ineffective. The first large mass organization was the Townsend movement during the 1930s. Over one million followers became attracted to Francis Townsend, whose guaranteed pension plan was supposed to create jobs by the exodus of the old from the labor market and also end the Depression (Holtzman, 1963). The institution of a national social security program interrupted the momentum of the Townsend movement by offering a governmental response to the Townsend Movement's central issue. Poor organization also helped to prevent the Townsendites from becoming a continuing, powerful vanguard for the elderly in the American political system.

The Utopians were another organization that offered a plan for economic security. This group gained over one-half million members during the Depression; however, the membership declined rapidly by



1933. A third group, Upton Sinclair's "End Poverty in California" (EPIC), was equal in numbers to the Utopians (Pinner et al., 1959). The membership of EPIC waned with Sinclair's 1934 gubernatorial defeat in California. George McClain's "Citizen Committee for Old Age Pensions," whose membership peaked in the early 1950s, was the final mass movement of this era. Each of these groups was started in California, and Holtzman (1963) considered California's concentration of elderly who were sensitive to economic conditions, together with a tradition of independent political action, to be the reasons for their occurrence. Several other smaller groups with similar goals were established during this period in California.

These early groups influenced the climate of public opinion, and there is some evidence to support the contention that these groups had a political effect on the leaders who formulated policy. Historians such as Achenbaum (1978) and Fischer (1978) acknowledged that these early age-based groups were part of a movement that proposed changes in governmental policy and created an accepting attitude among the nation and politicians for old age legislation. Graebner (1980) concluded that these groups forced Roosevelt's hand on the Social Security issue, and Perkins (1946), a long-time close confidant of Roosevelt's and his secretary of labor, wrote that few people understood the influence of these pension movement groups on legislation. These groups are not credited with being strong influencing agents on the social legislation affecting the elderly during this era by scholars such as Putnam (1970), who studied many of these early groups; Lubove (1968), who authored a text on the development of Social Security; and Pratt (1976), who



contrasted these early groups with more recent groups of the elderly. Rivalry among these groups prevented collaboration and limited their efficacy. Thus, there are conflicting points of view and interpretations about the influence of these groups, but their consciousness raising did publicize the plight of the elderly. The fact remains that if these early pension groups had not been in existence, the mood of the country would not have been focused on pension issues and the related problems of the elderly. One assumes that politicians and congressional voting on legislation such as Social Security and other New Deal programs were affected by the fervor created by these groups. Even Lubove (1968), who was skeptical about the role of these groups, indicated that they expedited the time table for New Deal legislation. The attention given to the Social Security program, the Second World War, and increased standards of living in the late forties diminished the impetus for a national old age interest group.

Carlie (1969) suggested several reasons for the failure of these early age-based interest groups to achieve their goals: (1) the aged were too heterogeneous to support one issue of a charismatic leader; (2) the groups often had an inadequate organization, lacked lobbying skills or the resources to implement aims; and (3) the demands had been unrealistic. Furthermore, these old age organizations were rapidly organized and of too short durations to cause major impact.

#### Senior Citizens Organizations

By the 1960s several organizations had become advocates for the aged. Pratt (1974) studied the contemporary organizations which influence senior citizens. He identified 10 such groups involved in



politics. Three are organized mass membership groups for the aged: the National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA) and the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP) function as one organization in the political arena; the National Council for Senior Citizens (NCSC) initially formed to campaign for Medicare in the early 1960s but later included other senior concerns; and the National Association of Retired Federal Employees (NARFE) that concerns itself with little that does not affect the federal employee. Four groups are trade associations: the American Association of Homes for the Aging, the American Nursing Home Association, the National Council of Health Care Services, and the National Association of State Units on Aging. The Gerontological Society of America is the lone professional group. The National Council on the Aging is a confederation of over a thousand welfare agencies. The tenth group in this 1974 study is the National Caucus on the Black Aged, composed of several hundred professionals whose mission is to accentuate the concerns of the black elderly. An eleventh group, the Gray Panthers, is an activist group of several thousand persons which gathers considerable publicity but lacks a political organization at this time. In the closing years of the 1970s, several other professional and trade organizations were formed, but their impact has not been evaluated.

Pratt (1974) attributed the birth of modern senior advocacy to social trends in the 1950s. He argued that social philosophies of public agencies and trade associations combined with the sense of injustice about the elderly contributed to a growing awareness of the old in our society.



The three mass membership associations are of interest here. The NCSC, originating in 1961, was associated with the labor movement and the Kennedy presidential campaign. The NRTA, originating in 1947, was established for the social betterment of retired teachers. The early goals of this group were not political but were oriented to a cooperation with private enterprise, providing inexpensive services and improving the economic conditions of retired teachers. In 1955, after the NRTA aligned itself with an insurance company, its membership increased. Its services were expanded to aid all retirees, culminating in the founding of AARP. By the early 1960s, NRTA/AARP became involved in legislative activities. An improved financial condition from expanded membership has enabled NRTA/AARP to divest its assets, lessen its dependence on its original business ties, and expand its role. This financial situation has permitted greater independence as an organization to serve the elderly population by providing information, research, advocacy, and other services. The NARFE, founded in 1921, is the oldest group and is also the least influential. It rarely advocates issues that are not pertinent to federal employee benefits. The organization began as a service group when federal employees received coverage under a federal pension plan.

Pratt (1974, 1976) depicted these three national organizations as having several common characteristics that enable them to survive where earlier groups failed. The recent groups are more persistent in their goals and depend less on external opinions and influences for support. The earlier groups relied on charismatic leaders while having either no plan or an inadequate plan for continuance of the organization.



The development of a competent bureaucracy with replaceable leadership, the generation of revenues, and an accepting political environment are conditions for the success of these latter senior citizen organizations. The legislative aims of these recently developed organizations for the elderly have focused on concerns of the elderly, just as other interest groups in the United States have represented their constituencies. Competing interest groups fostering legislation was termed interest group liberalism by Lowi (1969). Beginning with the Kennedy administration, interest groups with a constituency were more accepted as speakers for their constituents and became more involved in policy making than in prior administrations. This accepting political environment encouraged interest groups for the aged to participate with the more traditional advocacy groups of labor, medicine, business, and other business and professional groups.

Pratt (1974, 1976) concluded that mass membership bodies constitute politically viable entities which are capable of influencing legislation. Research (Holtzman, 1963; Pinner et al. 1959) conducted on mass membership organizations advocating elderly concerns prior to the 1960s indicated a pessimistic outlook for the future of these groups to influence national policy. The current conclusion is that contemporary old age political organizations are able to advocate for the elderly, but, because they are multipurposed, they may not be as effective as groups whose sole purpose is to lobby. These senior citizen groups have increased the efficacy of the aged.

#### Political Potential of the Elderly

Pratt (1979) argued that there has been scant interest by political scientists in the politics of aging. He denoted 1969-1979 as the time



in which research has increased and as a period in which the knowledge about the politics of aging is less than adequate. He concluded that researchers have begun to alter their thinking about the political potential of the aged. Sigel and Hoskin (1975) observed that research on the effect of aging on political orientations has not focused on the aged themselves but has sampled nonaged groups and drawn conclusions about an age effect. Cutler (1977) wrote about the need for a sub-field of political gerontology whose foundation is in the sister disciplines of sociology and social psychology. These observations lead us to discuss the knowledge base regarding the political potential of the elderly to advocate.

Any advocacy group has as its goal the achievement of certain objectives and the increase of its political power. The preceding section focused on national old age associations operating in two eras. The first era included charismatic, single issue groups that existed before 1950 and were labeled as age-based interest groups. The second era began in the 1950s and can be considered as the senior advocacy era. Gerontologists (Atchley, 1980; Binstock, 1972; Pratt, 1976) generally agreed that old age groups prior to the 1950s did not have extensive influence while the more recent old age groups have had modest successes. There is no doubt that the elderly have enormous potential for advocacy. Consensus on the potential of the aged to increase their political power or become an effective advocacy group was a more debatable issue. One group of scholars did not predict an increase of political efficacy by the aged, but a second group did predict an increase. Several other scholars offered insights about the question without stating a conclusion.



Some gerontologists (Binstock, 1972, 1974; Cameron, 1974, Campbell, 1971) argued that the elderly will not gain any political influence in the near future. Their predictions focused on such barriers as the variety of interests of the aged, lack of group identity by the aged, improved standards of living by recent retirees, life-long political affiliations to which loyalties are maintained, and the lack of agreement by the elderly as to their becoming a political threat. Binstock's (1972) major premise against the elderly becoming an effective pressure group was what is frequently referred to as an electoral bluff. Any pressure group must be able to deliver votes, and Binstock saw a low probability of the elderly voting as a block. Cutler and Schmidhauser (1975) reported that many older individuals do not classify themselves as aged, and, therefore, this lack of age identity prevents aged-based political participation.

Henretta (1973) noted the general lack of interest in political participation by large numbers of elderly persons. Other writers, such as Cottrell (1960), Rose (1962), and Tibbitts (1962), viewed the impetus for legislation pertaining to the aged as arising from the aged themselves but stated that the pressure to enact such legislation emanates from nonage-based organizations.

Hudson (1978) discussed two major political resources of the aged: their legitimacy as a political constituency and their utility to other political actors. These attributes contributed to past successes for the elderly more than would be indicated by their numbers or political threat based on those numbers. The legitimacy of policy for the elderly is based on the belief that the elderly are a



disadvantaged group who deserve governmental assistance because their plight is beyond their individual control. Binstock (1972) contended that most politicians have been careful to avoid offending the aged. Other political entities have utilized concerns of the aged to enhance passage of legislation favorable to their own interests, and benefits to the elderly were a secondary concern. Hudson (1978) stated that political benefits are diminishing for nonaged groups who exploit the aged by portraying them as downtrodden.

Several other gerontologists, Butler (1974), Peterson et al. (1976), and Ragan and Dowd (1974), suggested an increase in the political power by the aged. They reported that numerical increases of the elderly, improved socioeconomic status, higher levels of education, increased homogeneity, and segregation of the aged will bring forth a stronger and more effective political force for the aged. The five characteristics are more frequently based on speculation rather than conclusions from empirical research. To conclude that these five characteristics will foster new political interests is an untested proposition.

The broad question of senior power has been discussed by political scientists. When Hudson (1978) and Vinyard (1978) surveyed the historical record and assessed the activities of contemporary advocacy organizations, they emerged with a pessimistic prognosis. They stated that political influence benefiting elderly Americans is often derived from younger persons operating on behalf of the aged. In addition, there has been a tendency to study the politics of the aged within the framework of a social movement.

There is a need for new research which concentrates on the elderly as their own advocates. Prior research has shown that a large



constituency of vested interest groups has benefited from legislation for the elderly. These vested interest groups include representatives of social service providers, unions, nursing home administrators, and insurance advocates. Vinyard (1978) referred to these groups who represented the elderly during the 1970s as a professional social movement identified by the following characteristics: (1) a large proportion of resources originating outside the aggrieved group, (2) a small membership base, (3) the development of a professional leadership group which may not belong to the constituency, and (4) a claim that they represent the aged when indeed they represent only a small portion of the elderly. Vinyard concluded that an elderly self-advocacy group is necessary. This is not to imply that professional advocacy groups are not beneficial, for their establishment was a necessary first step in the elderly becoming their own advocates. A similar transition occurred in the historic development of other groups in this country, for example, the mental health, labor, and civil rights movements. Each had a series of representatives and vested interest groups advocating for them before those defined as the target group became involved in their own advocacy. If one views the politics of aging as passing through similar historical phases, it appears as a likely outcome that an advocacy system will develop in which the elderly themselves are the major component.

A basic assumption for this research was that the past successes and failures of political advocacy by the elderly were not a basis for the future role of older persons becoming involved in their own advocacy. Binstock and Levin (1976) emphasized that because



the American political culture stresses participatory processes, attempts to secure the support of constituencies customarily take the form of having constituencies participate in the decision-making processes of policy implementation. Such participation frequently engenders delays and goal adoptions that make for inefficient implementation of programs and sometimes outright failure. Binstock et al. (1974) concluded from a study of commissions, councils, and committees of aging that the participation of various elderly constituencies in these bodies was comparatively ineffective and not innovative. Although this study maintains that these bodies are not efficient mechanisms for advocacy by the elderly, the conclusion does imply that alternative forums of advocacy might be effective and innovative. Kerschner (1976) took a position contrary to that of Binstock and described advocacy as a process which enables the elderly to change their lives and realize their own goals.

Turk et al. (1966) stated that new and stronger community ties among the elderly will cause new opinions when former ties to family, church, and other previous associations of the aged have been replaced. The elderly have migrated to Florida in large numbers. Streib (1980) estimated that over 650,000 elderly persons have moved to Florida since World War II. Campbell (1971) pointed out that the old have the disadvantage of being a small minority of the general electorate. This is not the case in Florida where the potential elderly voter is approximately 25 percent of the total electorate (Thompson, 1979).

Some observers considered the the political participation of the aged as limited; however, Sigel and Hoskin (1975) indicated that knowledge about older adults' political socialization and resocialization



is quite incomplete. Others suggested social class as a dominating variable for participation, but Abramson (1974) offered data concerning the declining importance of social class and the increasing importance of partisan issue attitudes during the past thirty years. Douglas et al. (1974) stated that political opinions are more sensitive to period effects than to age or cohort effects. Glenn (1969) concluded that when the variable of education is controlled, an elderly person is likely to be more knowledgeable about political issues than a younger person. Conclusions of many scholars (Agnello, 1973; Cutler and Kaufman, 1975; Foner, 1974; Glenn, 1974; Lipsett and Ladd, 1972) have failed to support the proposition that the elderly become more politically conservative with age. All of these findings question the assumption that aging increases one's investment in the status quo and resistance to change. In fact, Glenn (1974) contended that it may be a cohort effect because he found that in recent cohorts of the elderly, individuals who pass middle age have become more liberal. Glenn and Grimes (1968) also indicated that among individuals of similar socioeconomic levels, those over the age of 60 consistently demonstrate a higher interest in politics.

In general, the politics of aging has generated comparatively little attention. Thus, these conclusions are tentative. This section has focused primarily on the characteristics of the aged as they affected potential political participation. These characteristics are (1) diverse interests and socioeconomic characteristics; (2) individuals as leaders; (3) elderly individuals' general lack of interest, knowledge, skills, and resources that contribute to a group; (4) age identity; and (5) individual attitudes.



### Organizational Aspects

Political participation is more comprehensible if one takes into account the individual's organizational ties and the opportunities that these organizations present. Trela (1971) conducted a study of the political consequences of old age associational membership and found that members of these organizations are more likely to engage in a variety of political activities than other groups of elderly. It is important to consider what kind of organizations will be able to articulate the political needs of the elderly and how they will carry out the demands. Henretta (1973) stated that the elderly have no continuous organizations around which to build an effective political movement. A further tenable line of inquiry is to ask not whether the old as a social category will become an effective political force, but rather under what conditions and among what segments of the elderly is such an occurrence likely to take place (Cutler, 1973).

Another important subject for research is the contextual effects and political behavior of the groups involved; that is, How do the structure and processes of political advocacy groups affect the flow of political information (Sheingold, 1973)? Cutler (1977) presented data that suggest political activity appears to increase rather than decrease with age and that this general pattern continues at least into the sixth decade of life. He concluded that decreased organizational participation by the elderly occurs when the elderly are confronted with barriers such as poor health or lack of transportation.

In one of the few studies of a national age-based organization, Pinner et al. (1959) studied the McClain movement and found that three



elements of participation are necessary for an organization to be capable of effecting changes in the political world: commitment, interpersonal experiences, and rationality. They added that an organization representing the elderly with significant proportions of these qualities would be successful in the political arena. Kasschau (1976) claimed that the elderly cannot rely only on national senior citizens' organizations to lobby for their interests because these organizations have an inadequate structure for the task. Thus, she claimed that older citizens are underrepresented in the processes of political negotiation for scarce resources. Kasschau argued for new and innovative processes for representation of the elderly's interests.

Kahn and Allegrucci (1981) studied the events that led to the development of a state office on aging which they concluded is the most efficient advocate for the elderly in the state of Kansas. Several key bureaucrats determined the state office to be an important need for the elderly and involved themselves in the political struggle. However, it was the strong advocacy by the elderly for the creation of the state office, in concert with these bureaucrats, which became the central force in its establishment. Without the support of the aged, the legislators would not have been persuaded to create the agency. Pratt (1980) pointed out that states do not simply mirror national concerns and that for a full understanding of how government responds to elderly persons' needs, a greater amount of attention must be directed to government processes at the state level. The federal planners apparently realized this when they included state advocacy programs in the 1973 amendments to the Older Americans Act. The Silver Haired



Legislature, the focus of this study, is a new and innovative process which could have the characteristics deemed necessary by Pinner et al. (1959) and Kasschau (1976). Subsequently the Silver Haired Legislature may fulfill the role that Pratt (1976) suggested is necessary for a future successful political effort by the aged, a cohesive and centralized organization.

A further point is not whether to have participation but whether to incorporate it as part of the official process (Weaver, 1973). Early analyses of interests groups, including Milbrath's (1963) and Wilson's (1973), emphasized sound organizational planning and effective communication with decision makers as necessary for effective advocacy. Some scholars have gone beyond this essential need for maximizing an interest group's capacity to employ a potentially useful resource. They have suggested that an organization's goals should be the pursuit of a special niche in the political process in order to influence policy. Groups should attempt to become "institutionalized" in the policy process (Davidson, 1977). Hardin (1978) supported this viewpoint and defined the decision makers as an amalgam of certain agencies along with key legislators and affected interest groups.

Another view is offered by Estes (1979), who utilized Warren et al.'s (1974) dichotomy of citizen involvement and citizen action for the political role of elderly Americans. Citizen involvement is characterized by an agency's providing for appropriate input from the client population served by the agency and whose backing would help the agency's visibility and provide a rationale for its program. The assumptions are that "reasonable" citizen participants will eventually hold the same views as the agency staff and that citizen participants will



support agency programs after receiving sufficient "education" from the agency.

Involvement may be contrasted with the citizen action role which emphasizes the needs and wishes of the citizens as defined by the citizens themselves. This latter role represents the exercise of citizen power. Participation in the action role is for the purpose of obtaining political power—of changing the system to reflect more accurately the needs and demands of the participants. This is in contrast to the involvement role characterized by an emphasis on obtaining desired services.

Two major frameworks of aged-based politics are currently employed by gerontologists, although neither includes a Silver Haired Legislature-type mechanism. Binstock (1976) claimed that government officials seek to legitimize their policies by allowing access to amenable groups representing the aged. This view is similar to the citizen involvement role previously discussed. Pratt (1976) emphasized the value of aged-based organizations as sources of technical advice which is similar to the citizen action role. An aged-based organization that is essentially an initiator in the structure of the legislative process does not fit either current framework. While it may be more representative of the citizen action role, it would be more precise to describe the Silver Haired Legislature as an amalgam of the two major frameworks or citizen approaches.

Hudson and Binstock (1976) and Pratt (1979) agreed on the existence of new organizational groups of older persons at the state level, such as the SHL, that have never been studied. Each of these scholars



strongly emphasized a need for further research that includes recently developed processes viewed as necessary for expansion of practical alternatives for advocacy. Furthermore, these alternatives, if successful, can become socializing agents for the elderly. Rosow (1974) pointed out that the elderly need socializing groups which can provide group support, new roles, and role models.

### Florida's Political Scene

Florida has experienced a rapid growth in population since World War II, primarily from northeastern and midwestern states. In 1980, Florida was the fastest growing state in the country with a growth rate in excess of 43 percent since 1970 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1981). Its population of over 9.7 million ranks seventh in the United States. Persons over the age of 60 account for almost 25 percent of the population (Colburn and Scher, 1980). Dauer (1980b) claimed that the political system of Florida is moderate in the political spectrum of pluralistic politics. The state is neither conservative nor liberal and the political mood emphasizes efficiency in government programs.

Dauer and St. Angelo (1980) stressed the importance of lobbying in Florida State politics. All citizens have the right to lobby as guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States' Constitution. The art of advocacy and lobbying offers significant opportunities for political action. Lobbyists are required to register with the state, specifically with each chamber of the legislature; however, individuals create their own definitions of the term lobbyist. There is no clear demarcation between an interested citizen advocating a bill and advocating by a professional lobbyist. Lobbyists can be either paid or



unpaid. Some lobbyists are funded by those they represent. In 1973, these funds totaled over \$100,000, or over \$10 per session day per legislator (Dauer and St. Angelo, 1980). Lobbyists are not required to report on whom the money was spent. They need only to report how the money was spent by listing the amount in broad categories such as campaign contributions, entertainment, and so forth. The Silver Hairs are unpaid but attempt to shape government policy. In 1980, the SHL leadership had been requested by Silver Hairs to register for the first time. This action reflects the Silver Hairs' self-perception as lobbyists. During other years, less than five Silver Hairs have registered at their own discretion.

Effective lobbying is a full-time activity. The lobbyist must be present for committee meetings, floor debates, and informal meetings, as well as available and active when the legislature is not in session. Part-time lobbyists such as the Silver Hairs are at a distinct disadvantage. The Silver Hairs entrust their state capital lobbying efforts to a few members holding SHL leadership positions. Some Silver Hairs frequent the legislature for personal contacts, but most reported contacting their legislators by phone, mail, or at local meetings to lobby SHL bills several times during a session, particularly when SHL bills are to be acted upon.

Dauer and St. Angelo listed the informal rules of a lobbyist:

- (1) Never lie to a public official; otherwise credibility is lost.
- (2) Never threaten an elected official with defeat. This angers legislators and tends to make them uncooperative. Effective lobbyists do not use this type of threat. The elderly have been described as



having the potential for defeating public officials but not the ability to deliver an election. The legislators, thus, perceive the elderly as a visible constituency.

Business interests, followed by professional occupation groups such as lawyers, teachers, and doctors, are well represented in Florida by lobbyists. Dauer and St. Angelo noted only a handful of lobbyists for senior citizens. This represents a lesser degree of involvement which typifies lobbyists for associations representing retarded children, university students, and abused criminals. Thus, the SHL as a new form of lobbying has developed in an accepting political environment, but in reality it competes in an environment dominated by better organized and more generously funded interests.

The SHL lobby efforts must be continuous if success is to be realized. The state house of representatives has a turnover of approximately 31 percent every two years and the senate's turnover rate is 45 percent every four years (Dauer, 1980a). The speaker of the house and president of the senate are powerful individuals because they appoint committee chairs, 20 in the house and 14 in the senate. Each year about 1,800 bills are introduced in the house while the senate receives about 1,200. Approximately 450 general laws are adopted and another 200 or so special or local acts are passed. These pertain to a specific locality only (Dauer, 1980a).

In the state legislature, the House Health and Rehabilitative Services Committee handles most senior citizen bills, but only one of its six professional staff members works with legislation for the elderly because many other matters fall within the committee's jurisdiction.



The Administration on Aging and its local representatives, the Area Agencies on Aging, are legally the official advocates for the aged. In Florida, advocacy resides with the Aging and Adult Services Advisory Council (Streib, 1980). This council has little visibility because the Division of Aging and Adult Services is one of nine service programs within the larger Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (Bowman and Smith, 1980). In 1977, Florida ranked twenty-third among states in the total number of professional employees in aging services offices (Streib, 1980). Both Estes (1975, 1979) and Fritz (1979) suggested that an umbrella-type agency for the aged which is several bureaucratic levels removed from department directors, as exists in Florida, inhibits more than it facilitates political action by the elderly. In short, decision makers assume that the formal structure, such as in Florida, represents the interests of the elderly when in fact input from the aged is minimal. Therefore, a false consciousness of participation by the elderly is represented and alternative actions by the aged are considered anomalies to the system.

Browne and Epstein (1980) collected data in 1979 to compare interest groups on behalf of the elderly in four states. Florida was one of these states, and their study is the only known research that describes the politics of aging in Florida. Their study was based on several interviews with staff or officers of the six organizations involved with state legislative politics on behalf of senior citizens or issues related to them. These organizations were identified from the list of registered lobbies, legislators' interviews, administrators of aging programs, and recommendations from the respondents' interviews.



The six organizations identified as active in Florida were the American Association of Retired Persons/National Retired Teachers Association, AARP/NRTA; Congress of Senior Citizens; Florida Association of Homes for the Aging, Inc.; Florida Council on Aging; Florida Nursing Home Association; and Senior Citizens' North Florida Council, Inc. Active local groups and organizations who advocated municipal or county issues were not included.

The six Florida organizations studied were described in a variety of ways as a small collection of heavy investors, lobbyists with few directives from rank and file memberships, a collection of individuals who pay little attention in maintaining the group, and members able to serve their personal needs and their organization's work. Browne and Epstein (1980) reported that only the AARP/NRTA lobbyists are continuously active, with the other organizations lobbying when the occasion warrants. They concluded that exchanges are rare among these six organizations and no coalition building has occurred. Browne and Epstein briefly mentioned the SHL in Florida, and, since its impact had not been determined when their data were collected, the SHL was not included in their analysis. They noted, however, that the SHL has a "decidedly bureaucratized look" (1980:14) and is involved in serious politics of the state while becoming a "cadre of active but somewhat aimless lobbyists" (1980:15). They excluded further comment on the SHL in Florida because they lacked data. Focusing on the six organizations in their study, they concluded that Florida has no organizational dimension to its state politics and the elderly were unorganized. Statements by the legislative staff and administrators interviewed demonstrated that



quiet contacts with the legislators on behalf of inexpensive programs were the key ingredients for successful advocacy. It is this quiet approach and an attitude favorable to economical programs in Florida that consistently ranks Florida as one of the states near the bottom of the 50 states on innovative government (Gray, 1973; Walker, 1969).

### Discussion

The research on the political behavior of the elderly represents a conglomerate of issues. Given the generally short history of gerontological research and the only recent attention to the politics of the aged, the findings and conclusions are somewhat uneven and inconclusive. A large number of the findings reported here are of two types. One is the summary and analyses of historical events relying on secondary data and recall of situations in interviews. This group of writers is represented by Carlie (1969), who discussed the problems of pre-1950 old age interest groups; Graebner (1980), who analysed retirement; Holtzman (1963), who described old age politics prior to 1950; Pinner et al. (1969), who made a case study of political behavior of the aged; Putnam (1970), who reviewed California's old age groups; and Pratt (1974, 1976), who focused on more recent old age advocacy groups.

The second type of scholarship reported here is what one can label as contemplative essays. Without any intention to diminish these reputed thinkers or cast aspersions on their scholarship, this researcher believes that these opinions should be tested with empirical research. Explanations and ideas offered in these contemplative essays have sometimes become accepted as social facts. Empirical



findings would enhance confidence in these conclusions and predictions.

Writers of the contemplative essays include Binstock (1972, 1974), who has stimulated considerable thinking about the aged and predicted minimal political impact by the elderly; Cameron (1974), who supported Binstock's contention; Cutler (1976), who enumerated resources for the elderly; Estes (1975, 1979), whose writings are suggestive for the social restructuring of approaches to the elderly; Foner (1974), who attempted to explain political behavior by the utilization of age stratification concepts; Fritz (1979), who wrote on the Administration on Aging's ability to advocate for the elderly; Hudson (1978), who realistically viewed the funding programs for the elderly; Kerschner (1976, 1981), who hinted for ways the elderly can improve their political influence; Lipsett and Ladd (1972), who commented on political activity levels by future cohorts; Peterson et al. (1976), whose view was similar to that of Lipsett and Ladd; and both Pratt (1980) and Vinyard (1978), who described the probable involvement in politics by the elderly. Pratt (1979) summarized the optimism by acknowledging that the one subject about which we have agreement is that we need more focused research on the politics of the aged.

Aside from the two aforementioned types of scholarship, there is a third type, a small number of empirical studies about the politics of the elderly. In the development of gerontology, some research attention was dedicated to exploring popularly held notions. Therefore, while data collected for the study of voting patterns seemingly point to a shift of the elderly's orientation to political conservatism, interest in politics by cohorts overrepresented the wide range of issues on the topic. Studies representing these notions were conducted by Abramson



(1974), Agnello (1973), Campbell (1971), Cutler (1973, 1977), Cutler and Kaufman (1975), Douglas et al. (1974), Glenn (1969, 1974), Glenn and Grimes (1968), and Glenn and Hefner (1972). Without oversimplifying these studies, we have a high degree of certainty that age does not foster political conservatism, lack of interest in politics, decreases in voter turnout or a reduction in political opinion. Each of these issues was popularized in the contemporary literature and in earlier research that failed to include other variables. For example, some variables were associated with age but were not necessarily caused by age, such as health factors, transportation, and lack of controls for socioeconomic status, or by attributing to age characteristics that are more properly associated with cohort or period effects. Cohort and period effects may be more explanatory in predicting some cohorts' political interest, orientation, and voting patterns than are age.

Hence, a dearth of research remains which is pertinent to this study. In short, What is it that we do know about the politics of the elderly? Specifically, What can we say about the elderly advocating for themselves in the present historical period based on empirical research?

Socioeconomic traits such as higher income and greater levels of education do characterize individuals who become actively engaged in political organizations (Verba and Nie, 1972), but partisan issues (Abramson, 1974) increase political cooperation by the elderly. Turk et al. (1966) suggested that the elderly who relocate are likely to develop associations which focus on their communities to replace former personal and family relationships. Roman and Taietz (1967) and Trela



(1971) maintained that the organizational situations and structures are important in explaining the elderly's political behavior.

Population statistics and demographic patterns are sufficient to underscore the importance of new research that appears promising for the understanding of political behavior by the elderly. The sociological importance of this study is strengthened by including the social environment and social settings factors which offer the structural opportunities for participation. An exploratory case study approach is suited for this sociological exercise. Furthermore, viable political participation would be strengthened by an ongoing organization as opposed to short-lived groups centered on either issues or individuals (Henretta, 1973). The few studies about the politics of the elderly at the state and local level support this structural view. Henretta studied an organizational group in Massachusetts and noted that its demise was due to similar causes of demise in the mass aged groups of the pre-1950 era, namely, that the Massachusetts group had a charismatic leader, focused on specific issues, and did not develop a viable organization.

Another monograph (Kahn and Allegrucci, 1981) concluded that the Department of Aging in Kansas is the strongest advocate for the elderly in that state because its role and position are institutionalized in the perceptions of decision makers. Kasschau (1978) concluded from research on decision makers' access and its effect on old age policies that the elderly must take collective action as a group expounding common concerns before the elderly can increase their political efficacy. This is more readily accomplished at the state or local levels than at a national level.



According to the data collected by Browne and Epstein (1980), who compared states and advocacy by the elderly in specific political contexts, a group such as the SHL does articulate senior citizen interests to a broader range of legislators than do other lobbyists of the elderly's interests. Browne and Epstein concluded that different lobbying styles emerged among the states in their sample. Their analyses suggest that interest groups should be seen as facilitators of policy rather than causal agents. They conceded that activists must adopt and fit into a style suited to their environment. In other terms, individuals who become active in politics, aged or young, must take advantage of the opportunities offered in the social structure to maximize their successes.

Miller et al. (1980) concluded that organizational activities aimed at the collective efforts among the elderly must be developed before advocacy will be successful. They strongly suggested that the perceptions of organizational activity on the part of the elderly would act to stimulate political involvement. Empirical studies (Brown and Epstein, 1980; Heneretta, 1973; Kahn and Allegrucci, 1981; Kasschau, 1978; Miller et al., 1980) all agreed for the need to focus on the situational determinants which include the social structure and organization to properly assess any advocacy by the elderly. The organizational structure is the key because it attracts advocates who are elderly and who claim a certain homogeneity in terms of common concerns in spite of actual heterogeneity of the aged population on a variety of characteristics.



As a result of these empirical findings and in an attempt to generate empirical data to augment the contemplative essays, this explorative case study of a political advocacy organization in Florida was initiated.

### Summary

This review of the literature represents a broad perspective of the research on the politics of aging. The nature of the findings has raised many questions. Some of the inconsistent findings can be explained by the differences in methods, by the historical period effects, by the sample used, by the theoretical framework, and by other research limitations. Some of the other issues presented below as questions have not been tested empirically. Hence, we shall state some of the unresolved questions that have been derived from the review of the literature which are pertinent to this study:

1. Are the elderly capable of advocating their own needs?
2. What kinds of conditions would foster successful advocacy and for what segments of the elderly?
3. Do advocacy innovations by the elderly have potential?
4. Are the demands of the elderly too heterogeneous and unrealistic for a cohesive action?
5. If the elderly have lacked the necessary skills, resources, knowledge, organizations, and opportunities for advocacy, what conditions can change these limitations?
6. Does a lack of group identity among the aged impede advocacy?
7. Can elderly advocacy groups become a part of the political process?



8. Do organizations provide the link between the individual and government?
9. What are the individual characteristics of those persons who participate in an effective organization?

These questions make clear that a study of advocacy and its effects cannot deal with the simple question of whether or not elected government officials are responsive to citizens or an elderly segment of citizens. Rather, one must consider the question of whose preferences government leaders respond to, and, most important, the mechanisms by which they become aware of these preferences and become motivated to act upon them. One of the main mechanisms by which the leaders become aware of citizen preferences and become motivated to act upon them is the system of political advocacy.

An important policy question is the determination of how the elderly articulate their political needs. Cutler (1976) argued that it is not necessary to presume unanimity among the aged, any more than among blacks or women, to anticipate the potential salience of the aged in politics. He took the position that advocates of the aged are increasingly developing resources by which influence can be wielded effectively in public political contexts.

Since states have been required to provide advocacy for the elderly by the revised Older Americans Act, there is increased evidence of activities at the state and local level by and for the elderly. Vinyard (1978) predicted that at such levels, the chances for success may indeed be greater than at the national level. This is true particularly in states or communities which have an unusually



high proportion of elderly. Also, demands are frequently limited in character at such levels and may not encounter the significant organized opposition found at the national level. Instead, local efforts may be needed primarily to push or prod an indifferent bureaucracy to think in terms of the special needs and interests of the elderly. Atchley (1980) concurred and ascertained that the role older persons themselves are left to play in politics is generally confined to the local area. Exceptions are those older persons who have been involved in politics steadily throughout their lives. At the local level, older people may indeed be influential, particularly on non-partisan issues, but nationwide politics offers older people very little in terms of either power or participation. State-level politics does not often afford older people the opportunity to increase their active participation even though they might like to be more politically active. Given the appropriate environment, however, older people can increase their political involvement.

The conclusion to be drawn is that the political opportunities of the elderly at the state level have been overlooked by researchers. Their investigation can add significantly to the understanding of the elderly's role in politics.



### CHAPTER III CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### Introduction

This chapter provides a framework from which objectives and hypotheses are generated. A major conclusion to be drawn from the review of the literature on the politics of aging is that a minimal amount of empirical data on the subject exists. Furthermore, even less descriptive research has been completed on the forms of political participation by the elderly. Concomitant with this paucity of research on the political participation by the elderly is the lack of theory to guide this research.

A goal for this study was to develop an approximate middle range theory as discussed by Merton (1949). Merton described middle range theory as abstract but connected to the real world. Middle range theories are clearly defined and operationalized concepts that are incorporated into statements of covariance for a limited range of phenomena that are to be tested in a research process. This study approximates middle range theory because it offers an abstract explanation of a limited phenomena in our world. However, unlike Merton's conceptualization, this study did not begin with concepts that became incorporated into statements of covariance. For Merton, middle range theory was a process toward a goal, and while we accept the goal, we chose an alternative process. This research was begun and continues in the



tradition of grounded theory offered by Glaser and Strauss (1967), albeit a modified version. Glaser and Strauss noted that their method can be adapted to an investigator's research situation. The concepts and hypotheses are derived from the data and are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research. This investigation is exploratory, and the derived ideas, findings, and model are to be tested more fully in future comparative analyses. The goal of this tradition is to discover theory through social research. Thus, this study utilizes the process associated with grounded theory to achieve the level of explanation known as middle range theory. This study is guided by basic concepts in social science that describe and explain political participation. Special emphasis is given to the notion of an opportunity structure as an intervening variable.

The main concern of this research is to describe and analyze a new phenomenon in the United States' political system that has appeal to advocates for the elderly. This new phenomenon, the Silver Haired Legislature (SHL), is characterized as an opportunity structure. Several investigators have incorporated the concept of opportunity structure in a usage similar to that found in this study. Verba and Nie (1972) showed that the opportunity structure of a particular domain of activity is a key factor which substantially influences whether or not persons who are predisposed to continued activity will in fact manifest activity. They implied that more research focused on opportunity structures might yield the data for us more fully to understand the effects of an accommodating social structure which is necessary before individuals are willing to participate in politics. Their



study, as does this one, concerns itself with political participation.

In gerontological research, Cutler (1977) suggested that the individual's apparent withdrawal from social participation may simply be a realistic response to the construction of the opportunity structure for participation. Carp (1968), in a study of older persons relocating from one residential facility to another, found that individuals engaged in activity more frequently in a facility whose structure offered more opportunities for activity. Similarly, Hochschild (1975, 1976) offered the notion of exceptional opportunity structures as a test for disengagement theory. She implied that a satisfactory test of the theory must include individuals who disengage even when their environments encourage engagement by offering distinctive opportunities to continue their involvement.

Atchley (1971), in a study of professors emeriti, indicated that it is the challenges of the social world or opportunity structures and the attractiveness of the roles offered that encourage commitment to activity. Also studying professors emeriti, Roman and Taietz (1967) used the concept of opportunity structure; however, they did not define the term precisely. They argued that engagement in activity is a result of opportunities for continued participation. Roman and Taietz stressed the situational determinants of behaviors and concluded that opportunity structures, conceived as a product of social structures, can offer sociological explanations rather than focusing on individual social traits and psychological explanations. They concluded that opportunities provided in the organizational structure were salient facts in their study. Roman and Taietz determined that the opportunity



structures providing for direct role continuity were discovered to be more facilitating for engagement in activities than an opportunity structure which required a change in roles. This latter finding is central to the experiential learning model discussed later. Cloward and Ohlin (1960) focused on the opportunities available to youth as an explanation for the development of juvenile gangs. They argued that the access to illegitimate means plays a large part in the distribution of juvenile deviant adaptations. Specifically, Cloward and Ohlin stated that, while individuals can acquire the values and skills associated with the performance of a particular role, they must also have the opportunities to discharge the role once it has been prepared. In the present study the explanation of behavior begins with the individual as the first level of analysis and combines with social traits the impact of community involvement and opportunity structures.

Therefore, since the idea of opportunity structure has some precedence to sociological and, particularly, to gerontological research, and because gerontologists have considered the concept as crucial in explaining the activity patterns of older persons, the author of this study offers the following definition. An opportunity structure is defined as the relationships in a social situation which expand the choice process from a particular range of alternatives.

The opportunity structure concept is not intended to continue the debate of the adequacy of citizen participation in the American political system. Others (McFarland, 1969; Thompson, 1970) adequately debated the issue. The central focus of that debate was whether and to what extent the study of political participation should be limited to



the actual participation situation in the United States, or whether scholars should consider alternative possibilities such as new participatory opportunities, groups, and techniques (Verba and Nie, 1972). This critique of the level of adequacy in the system raises difficult empirical questions. Thompson (1970) pointed out that many theorists of participation assume that citizens are autonomous and are the best judges of their own interests. Their assumption will not be challenged in this research. Here it is assumed that citizen influence operates in a context of national policy interest of citizen participation. Evidence will be offered to demonstrate that citizen involvement is instrumental for the elderly. Further, Mogulof (1970) concluded that citizen participation in general represents an unfulfilled goal in and of itself. It is the essence of the American experience. In the process of giving aggrieved groups influence over their resources, the life chances for the entire society will increase.

The concept under investigation is known as the Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) in Florida. This concept is described more fully in Chapter V. The SHL is a mock legislative session conducted annually since 1978 in which residents over the age of 60 are elected by the elderly to present ideas, debate issues, and prioritize legislation to be sponsored in the state legislature. Supported by public funds, the SHL concept, introduced in Missouri, creates a vehicle in the social system that not only expands alternatives but establishes a forum for the range of advocacy alternatives to coalesce at the state level.



Only recently (Pratt, 1976; Putnam, 1970) have any case studies of the elderly's advocacy efforts been published, and these efforts have been at the national level. There have been at least two at the state level. Henretta (1973) researched political protest by the elderly in Massachusetts and Kahn and Allegrucci (1981) documented the struggle in Kansas for a state department of aging. Given the sociopolitical environment and states' rights mood of the nation evidenced by the 1980 national elections, advocacy efforts at the state level are predicted to become increasingly more meaningful. This adds to the importance of this timely research. Estes' (1975) application of Warren's dichotomy of citizen participation will be utilized to describe the role of the SHL concept. Warren et al. (1974) created a typology for citizen participation—citizen action and citizen involvement. Each type has its own dynamics. In the former type the state gives priority to the needs and wishes of the self-advocates, and in the latter type the state determines the needs and wishes of a group within the context of overall state goals.

A further point is not whether to have citizen participation but whether to incorporate it as part of the official process (Weaver, 1973). Findings will be presented to indicate the institutionalization of the SHL in Florida and its place in the official process as indicated in the diagram (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 shows how the interests of the elderly are given an advantageous position in the state political process by allowing the SHL to have direct communication with the legislature rather than competing with other groups for scarce resources. The members of the SHL increase



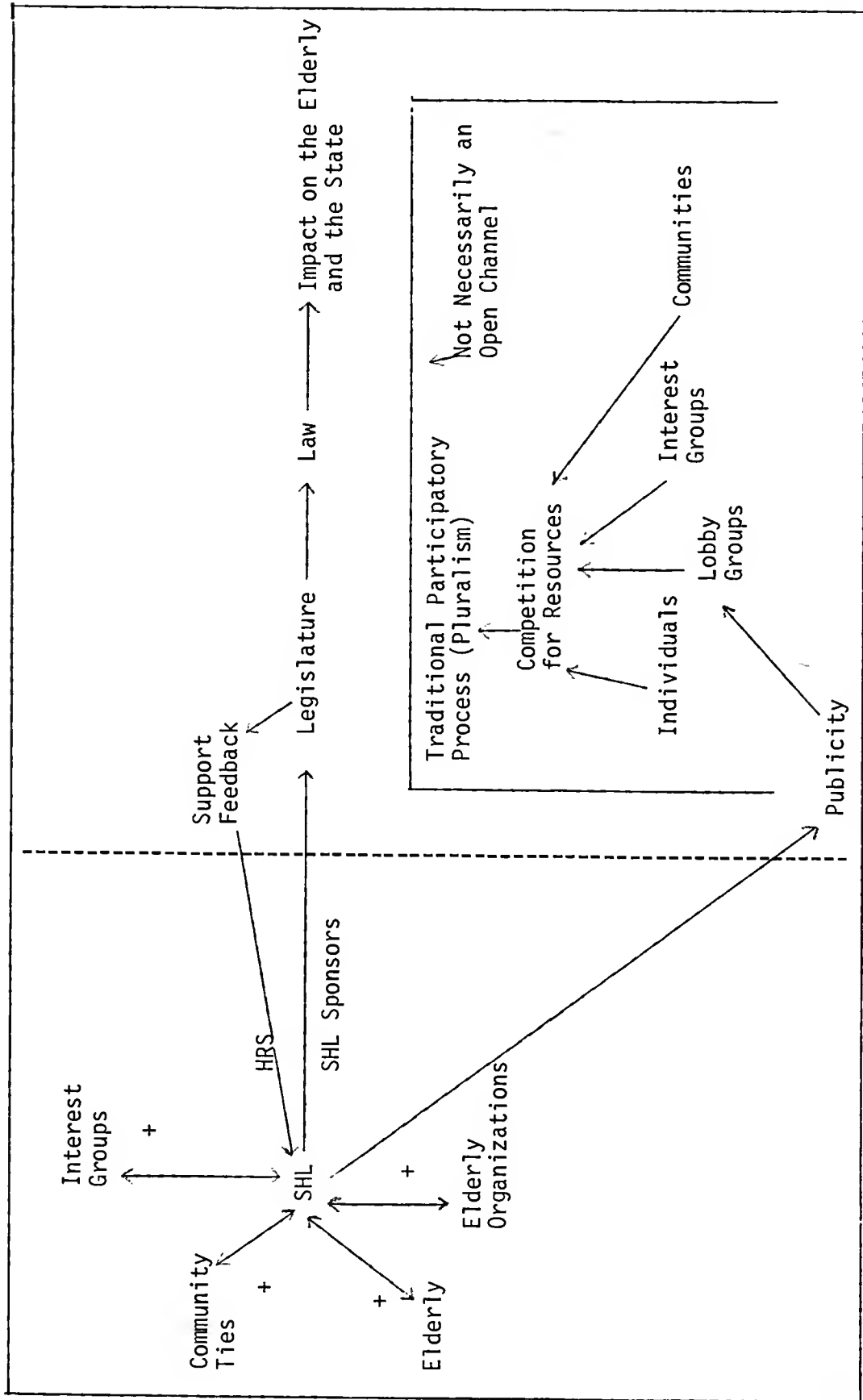


Figure 1. Opportunity Structure  
(Diagram shows the advantage of the SHL versus more traditional forms of advocacy.)



the information flow from the elderly, their organizations, and other community ties. The Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS) supports the SHL because its visibility increases awareness of aging programs. The SHL mechanism allows state legislators to gain a new, direct channel for information to the elderly population. Recognition of the SHL as representing the concerns of the aged also permits the state legislators to direct senior citizens' concerns to the SHL, which decreases demands on their time.

Another line of inquiry is to describe what conditions cause the aged to become a political force and in which segments of the elderly population is political activity greater (Cutler, 1973). Data offered in Chapter VI lead to conclusions about this latter inquiry.

### Framework

The data to be presented in Chapter VI describe the participants of the 1980 Silver Haired Legislature in Florida. The data are important for another reason. They precede a more extended discussion in Chapter VIII of the factors that shape participation. A major concern is the extent to which the Silver Hairs disproportionately represent particular social groups.

Most studies of political participation demonstrate that it is those persons with higher incomes, more education, and higher status occupations who participate. There are many reasons for this, such as greater resources, social skills, and psychological commitment. The result is that those who may need governmental assistance the least participate the most. The relationship between income, education, and occupation will be utilized as an indication of status. The relationship



of status to other behaviors and attitudes will be analyzed in Chapter VI.

The consequences in terms of governmental action of this asymmetry will also be explored. Verba and Nie (1972) concluded that the social status of an individual—his job, education, and income—determines to a large degree how much an individual participates. They also argue that these social characteristics are affected by intervening effects labeled as a variety of civic attitudes. The civic attitudes, such as the psychological involvement and a feeling of obligation, are tested in this study.

These concepts constitute a base line from which we look for other forces of participation by the elderly. One set of circumstances affecting participation involves the community ties of the Silver Hairs. Participation is fully comprehensible only if one takes into account the individuals' institutional contexts. Thus, the role of organizations and voluntary associations in relation to advocacy participation is analyzed.

Voluntary associations can be considered as social bases of democracy and, in particular, of American democracy (de Tocqueville, 1945; Mill, 1946). A full associational life has been considered the hallmark of American politics. Such association provides an intermediary level of organization between the individual and government. This intermediary function has a twofold purpose; it can prevent the occurrence of mass political movements by reducing frustrations or conflicts, and it can serve as a training arena for citizens to increase efficacy, participation, and influence. A rich political



participatory life may rest on a rich associational life. Organizational affiliation has been shown to be one of the most powerful predictors of political activity that remains strong over and above the social class of the individual (Nie et al., 1963). The assumption is that voluntary associations allow for more opportunities for participation in small units. Essentially, organizations are training grounds in participation that can be transferred to the political arena. Moreover, it is individuals in leadership positions who gain most from the organizational experience. Consequently, when an opportunity structure such as the Silver Haired Legislature becomes accessible, it is the leaders of community organizations who are elected to serve.

It is argued that the SHL offers an encouraging environment for political activity. This opportunity structure is likely to increase the political activity of the Silver Hairs. Thus, the data demonstrate what is termed an experiential learning model effect indicating that the longer one is exposed to politics, or situations that require similar skills, the more likely he is to increase his participation. The experiential learning model is so named because the political outcomes are a result of a series of life events. In each of these events the individual has internalized some knowledge, skills, and behaviors. In short, the individual has become political as a consequence of socialization, role modeling, imitation, and opportunities which can be reduced to the more generalized nomenclature of experience-based learning. Figure 2 diagrams the processes suggested.



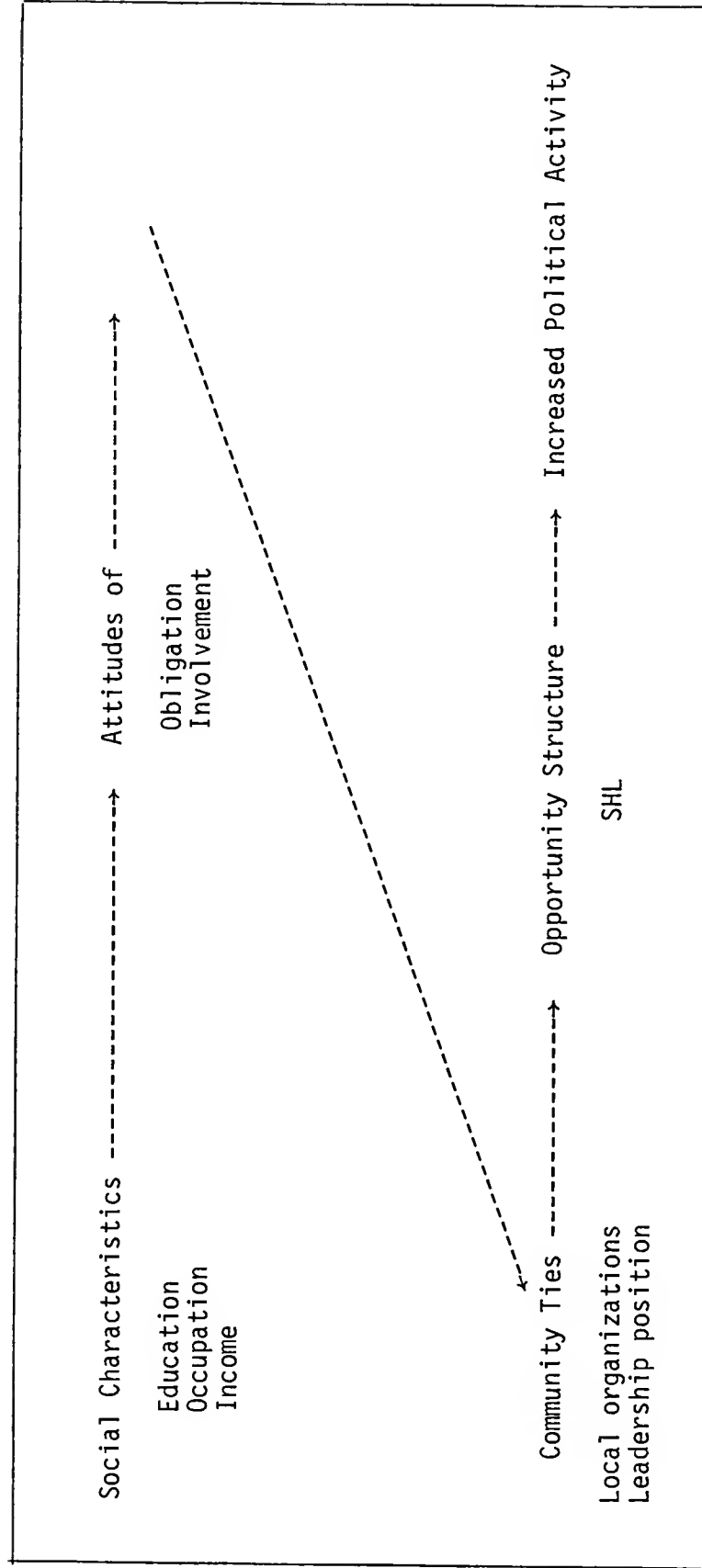


Figure 2. Experiential Learning Model



This experiential learning model assumes that individuals with social characteristics such as post-secondary education, above average incomes, and professional or technical skill occupations have been socialized to the values and skills basic for success in politics. The stratification literature contains studies that identify these traits (Coleman and Neugarten, 1971; Roach et al., 1969). Some examples of these social characteristics are community activities, self-control, competitiveness, disciplined efforts, ability to communicate effectively, and other-directedness. If these individuals learn and accept attitudes of obligation to their fellows and if the need to become directly involved in the activities beneficial to their communities is present, they are likely to participate in local organizations. Members of local organizations observe and participate in meetings and situations that stimulate the desire to seek solutions. This experiential learning model is consistent with the substantial body of research on social learning (Bandura, 1969; Honig, 1966; Skinner, 1953, 1959). Learning occurs as a result of interactions with other people. Skinner insisted that societies must make desirable behavior pay off. He argued that behavior is the expression of the determining effects of the past history of the individual. Attitudes and techniques conducive to political participation are learned from the positive and negative reinforcements that result from a person's behavior. Akers (1977) integrated this concept of rewards and punishments, known as operant conditioning, into a sociological explanation of deviant behavior. We utilize rewards to explain the motivations of the elderly who have demonstrated the propensity to become political advocates.



Since individuals with higher levels of education, income, and occupations are socialized to become joiners in community organizations, their active participation is perceived as an acceptable form for fulfilling their civic duty. Once a member of these organizations, the novice becomes initiated to the system of rewards for serving "others" in the community. The persevering novice gradually increases involvement and accepts a leadership position. Thus, the organization becomes a learning environment providing role models and roles for the individual to play. The member who accepts the goals of the organization and who expresses the desire to serve others is often selected for advanced leadership positions, provided earlier tasks were performed satisfactorily. These opportunities permit further development of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that can be considered anticipatory socialization for political roles. Typically, this person becomes more heavily committed in community-based organizations and actively seeks positions that maintain role continuity. These leaders also gain respect and trust within their communities. Consequently, when structured opportunities such as the SHL become available, these community leaders are the likely persons to be selected by members of their cohort. The leaders may use the new opportunity to expand their knowledge of politics and to increase their sense of obligation. Thus, new and continued political activities may be stimulated which are necessary to fulfill the community leaders' commitments. Each phase in this model builds gradually on the prior experiences of the individual with the accompanying knowledge and skills originating in new behaviors.



Atchley (1980) indicated that people who are involved in several roles and a variety of activities need not find substitutes for lost roles. He suggests that it is easier for these individuals to redistribute their time and energies among remaining roles and activities. This can explain the Silver Hairs who increase their political activities because they are now consolidating their commitments after completing terms as officers in their community organizations. They redistribute their energies to SHL activities.

### Objectives

Before turning our attention to the discussion of general hypotheses in this research, we have identified the broad objectives for the study. These objectives are stated briefly and serve as a guide for later discussions. They are intended to organize the information generated by the systematic data and other qualitative observations of the Silver Haired Legislature concept and its operation. The objectives are the following:

1. To assess whether the SHL is an innovative organization that offers an opportunity for the aged to advocate for themselves
2. To determine if the SHL has enough recognition by state officials to offer realistic legislative proposals
3. To conclude if the SHL is well-organized for its purposes
4. To examine if the SHL increases political participation of its members
5. To investigate whether the SHL provides a base for influencing policy which reflects the self-perceived needs of the older population



6. To explore whether the SHL stimulates its members' involvement in community organizations
7. To determine if age heterogeneity is a barrier for advocacy when the SHL provides the structure which fosters homogeneity on the issues
8. To discover the conditions that influence the SHL to make realistic demands on the political system
9. To study whether the SHL increased the elderly's political power by becoming part of the mainstream in Florida's political arena
10. To ascertain whether the SHL educates some segments of the elderly to the political process and which skills and resources of the elderly it enhances
11. To judge whether the SHL advocates for the general population, solely for the elderly, or for certain segments of the elderly.

These objectives must be understood within the perspective of the research, which is an exploratory study relying heavily on the descriptive approach. Descriptive research is necessary to determine social facts. The objectives are declarative statements derived from a series of questions that a researcher formulates prior to beginning the research. Thus, because these objectives are in nature generalized statements, it may not be necessary to operationalize them. The data analyses will be guided by these objectives, but the objectives emerge from different starting points and do not form a totally integrated whole. Large subjects can be studied in a series of stages. Completeness is not possible because the overall objectives are exploratory and the



development of a knowledge base about advocacy groups of the elderly at the state level is minimal.

Several general but somewhat more specific hypotheses were derived from the objectives. Table 1 represents the hypotheses presented in the next section as they relate to the objectives.

Table 1  
Hypotheses Derived from the Objectives

Objective number	Hypothesis number
2	2,3,4,7
4	1
5	2,5,6
10	6

### Hypotheses

While a traditional research strategy would specify hypotheses construction as an initial step deduced from a basic theoretical framework, an exploratory study requires a modified strategy.

The hypothesis must be testable with information generated in the case study. In order that flexibility be maintained in the search for satisfactory and relevant findings, several broad objectives had to be identified. From these objectives the following general hypotheses emerged:



- H<sub>1</sub> The Silver Haired Legislature as an advocacy process in Florida does not increase the level of self-advocacy, political participation, or commitment of its participants.
- H<sub>2</sub> The Silver Haired Legislature is not an opportunity structure that provides an advocacy mechanism which enables various segments of the elderly population to offer proposals that expedite consideration by state legislators.
- H<sub>3</sub> The Silver Haired Legislature is not an effective organization to compete for limited resources at the state level.
- H<sub>4</sub> The elderly in Florida are not recognized by elected decision makers as having a centralized organization to present realistic proposals.
- H<sub>5</sub> The Silver Haired Legislature does not create an advantageous position for the concerns of the elderly in the legislative process compared to aged-related advocacy prior to 1978.
- H<sub>6</sub> The elderly in Florida cannot advocate their own interests with a centralized organization.
- H<sub>7</sub> The Silver Haired Legislature is not viewed as a potentially successful advocacy forum for the elderly throughout the United States of America.

#### Plan of the Study

Chapter IV describes and discusses the methodology for the research. Chapter V traces the development processes of the Silver Haired Legislature concept and details the activities of the 1980 session of the Silver Haired Legislature. Chapter VI reports the results of the questionnaire sent to the Silver Hairs. Sociodemographics, attitudes, and



behaviors of the participants are considered as well as the data pertinent to the testing of the experiential learning model.

Chapter VII details the data from surveys of the Florida state legislators and the 50 state offices on aging. Chapter VIII focuses on the data as they pertain to the objectives and hypotheses. Each hypothesis is discussed and analyzed. Chapter IX summarizes the research, addresses various issues raised in the review of the literature, enumerates several issues, and suggests further research efforts.



## CHAPTER IV METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

This research utilized several data-gathering techniques such as retrospective history taking, interviewing, observation, survey questionnaires, and content analysis. The use of unstructured interviews with Silver Haired legislators and key state personnel responsible for coordination of the Silver Haired Legislature was the initial method employed. Following this, several retrospective histories of individuals involved with the Silver Haired Legislature were taken. These exploratory methods, coupled with a study of existing documents, records, and written accounts offered by the State Office of Aging and Adult Services and by Silver Haired legislators, fostered an understanding of the Silver Haired Legislature and clarified the processes involved.

Sponsorship and approval for the study were obtained from the state of Florida's Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services' Director of Aging and Adult Services. The coordinator of the Silver Haired Legislature served as a vital link between the investigator and other state personnel. Permission to conduct the research facilitated cooperation from state personnel and provided access to information and records of the state of Florida.



A primary source of information resulted from the principal investigator's assuming the observer-as-participant role (Gold, 1958). The 1980 Florida Silver Haired Legislature met from July 27 to July 31, 1980, in Tallahassee, Florida, in the state capitol. Two forms of contact helped to introduce the investigator and legitimize his presence. On July 21, 1980, a letter was sent to all members of the 1980 SHL (see Appendix A). This letter served as an introduction to the study and to this investigator. Initial correspondence was well received as measured by several return letters and contacts from other Silver Haired Legislators who provided the investigator with information. In addition, there was an announcement by the state coordinator for the SHL at the first general meeting of the 1980 Silver Hairs, who stressed the importance of this research. The letter and the announcement were two important contacts which helped to establish credibility for this research.

#### Data Collection

The SHL is composed of 160 members, 40 senators and 120 representatives. The investigator was given a staff name tag which permitted access to all meetings and to every physical location available to the Silver Hairs. An attempt was made to meet as many Silver Hairs as possible. It was assumed that the increased contact would ensure a more favorable response to the study and future requests. The investigator met over one-third of the SHL members during the observation period, including all of the SHL leaders. Some introductions lasted only a minute while at least one lasted several hours. Almost every legislator



remembered the initial correspondence, which saved the investigator considerable time and effort since it was not therefore necessary to explain who he was or the purpose of the study. In fact, some SHL legislators brought materials for the investigator to scrutinize, and other Silver Hairs were prepared for lengthy discussions.

The observation day typically began at 6:00 A.M. and lasted until midnight. The investigator gathered information while the SHL was in session by attending committee meetings, regional caucuses, leadership sessions, conversations, meal times, the actual legislative session, and the social breaks in the hotel where nearly all of the SHL members were staying. Both obtrusive and unobtrusive strategies were employed. At times, the observer role was difficult to maintain because various leaders and important persons in the SHL provided the researcher with information that could have easily resolved SHL issues and problems. However, the observer role as a nonparticipant precluded the researcher from divulging such information.

Unstructured interviews were conducted during the observation period with state personnel, state legislators, various SHL members, and the SHL leadership. The investigator also met with several individuals from other states who were attending the Florida SHL to gather information in preparation for their own states' SHLs. These out-of-state observers represented the states of Alabama, Louisiana, and Utah. The investigator was never refused information nor prevented from attending any meeting during the entire observation period.

One important benefit of the observation period was the increased understanding of the structure, processes, and membership of the Silver



Haired Legislature. This understanding aided the investigator in constructing a questionnaire which was sent to all Silver Hairs. Considerable care was taken to design the questionnaire so that its construction and presentation would ensure a good response rate as well as reduce the problems of reliability and validity.

Approximately half of the questionnaire (see Appendix B) contained forced choice-type questions with the remainder consisting of open-ended questions. The instrument was six pages in length and contained 48 questions which were divided into three broad sections. The first section was designed to collect general background information and sociodemographic data. The second section dealt with general information concerning the elderly: important influential groups in Florida, information sources, and the most pressing problems of the elderly. The third section concentrated on the Silver Haired Legislators' activities related to the Silver Haired Legislature and information about the community activities of the Silver Hairs. The questionnaire was designed not only to test specific hypotheses pertinent to the overall research but also to elicit information necessary to describe those persons who participated in the SHL. Several questions were duplicated from the questionnaire distributed by the state of Florida in a "call for proposal" for a statewide needs assessment survey. It was hoped that the state data would be available for a comparative analysis to the Silver Hairs' responses, but at this writing the state data are unavailable. Another entity besides the state of Florida was involved in the contractual agreement for the study and, thus, who has access to the data is an unresolved issue at this time.



The questionnaire generated 159 variables; however, most of the variables were not utilized in the analysis because of their limited frequencies.

The questionnaire was pretested by members of the SHL's senate and house of representatives as well as by 10 additional individuals who were not associated with the SHL; 5 of the 10 were over the age of 60. An interview was conducted with all of these individuals in order to discuss the questionnaire and to refine the instrument. The final version of the questionnaire was professionally printed in large type on pastel-blue paper (see Appendix B). This was done to ensure easy reading by those respondents with ophthalmological problems.

Three mailings to the entire 1980 Silver Haired Legislature were made. On September 12, 1980, the questionnaires were delivered to the post office but only 38 questionnaires were processed on that date. The remaining 122 questionnaires were postmarked on September 15, 1980. This delay was caused by poor communications at the post office. The first mailing also contained a cover letter, a stamped, self-addressed return envelope, and a sponsor letter (see Appendix A). A sponsor letter was included to demonstrate authenticity of the questionnaire and was assumed necessary to ensure a high return rate. The sponsor letter was signed by the president of the SHL senate, the speaker of the house of representatives, the Florida Department of HRS coordinator of the SHL, and the chairman of the investigator's dissertation committee.

A second mailing was made on September 26, 1980. This mailing included a duplicate of the items in the first mailing plus an additional cover letter explaining the second mailing (see Appendix A). The third and final mailing was on October 17, 1980. This mailing included a personal letter of thanks to the respondents and a final plea for



participation and the return of the questionnaire (see Appendix A). Of the 160 Silver Haired legislators, 139 responded by returning the questionnaire for a response rate of 86.9 percent. Little is known about the nonrespondents since anonymity was guaranteed to the participants. We do know that two Silver Hairs refused to participate because they believed the study to be an invasion of their privacy. At least two other nonrespondents were older than 90 years of age. Five other Silver Hairs who responded late enclosed notes of apology stating medical reasons for their tardiness; these included lengthy hospital stays and major surgery. It can be assumed that some of the nonrespondents experienced medical episodes that prevented their responding, but this is conjecture.

The Statistical Analysis System (SAS) was utilized in the analyses of the data. Univariate and correlation matrix procedures were the primary methods of analysis. Other procedures included cross tabulations, frequency tables, chi square, and measures of central tendency.

In order for information to be collected from the Florida State legislators regarding their views of the Silver Haired Legislature concept, a short, one-page questionnaire was mailed on October 27, 1980, to 158 members of the 1980 Florida State Legislature. Two seats in the legislature were vacated early in 1980, which explains the less than 160-member mailing. The questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter (see Appendix C). A duplicate mailing was sent on November 12, 1980. A poor response rate for this survey was anticipated as a result of conversations with a state legislator and staff members for state legislators. Essentially, they argued the SHL and the elderly



to be highly political subjects which would discourage responses. Several legislators announced their intentions to retire from the state legislature, and closed their offices prior to the first mailing. Other sources stated that the state legislators would be apprehensive about responding to a questionnaire about the Silver Haired Legislature for unknown political reasons. In spite of this conjecture and pessimism, it seemed to be a worthy enterprise to pursue the data from the political group most affected by the actions of the SHL. The state legislature questionnaire had a response rate of 63 percent with 100 responses.

Content analyses of data obtained from correspondence, records, and documents of state officials and the Silver Hairs were completed. Broadly defined, content analysis (Holsti, 1969) is any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specific characteristics of messages. This method substantiated data collected from individuals and permitted an evaluation of the seriousness that political groups have for the SHL. A primary function of these data was to evaluate the successes of the SHL as measured by the tracking of the SHL legislation to its final disposition.

A third questionnaire (see Appendix F) was sent to the directors of the planning offices for the elderly in each of the 50 state units on aging. The purpose of this survey was to assess the diffusion of the SHL concept and to establish a list of contact persons in each state where the establishment of a SHL or the planning for a SHL is present. The initial mailing of this questionnaire was on January 29, 1981, and follow-up mailings and contacts of states not responding initially were made on February 6 and March 2, 1981. Responses were received from the entire sample.



All three samples were promised anonymity and the Human Subjects Committee at the University of Florida ruled that the subjects involved in this research were at no risk that could be considered harmful to their well-being.

### Variables

As mentioned earlier, the questionnaire to the Silver Hairs generated 159 variables. A number of these variables were created due to the coding techniques of the responses, particularly those resulting from open-ended questions. For example, 25 different problems of all age groups were identified. Also 40 members of the Silver Haired Legislature were listed as influential in the SHL. When coding these responses, the investigator created a variable for each response and the respondent was coded as either including or omitting these variables. Most of these variables had low frequencies, less than 5, and therefore were not included in the reported analyses except in general remarks.

The questions which elicited interval data concerns—age, years of residency, years of formal education, number of hours spent on SHL activities, times of monthly activities, number of leadership positions, and income per month—were coded as intervals. Some of these variables were recoded as ordinal data for the development of an index as a measure of status (see Chapter VI).

Nominal-level variables used in the analyses were birthplace, state or country of longest residency, sex, marital status, employment, life-long occupation, type of business, spouse's occupation, type of business during employment, type of residence, type of co-residents, community activities, income sources, types of groups represented in



in the SHL, influential individuals and groups in the state and the SHL, information sources, types of problems confronting all ages, source of knowledge about the SHL, reasons for involvement, chamber membership, petition signees, important completed tasks as a Silver Hair, political contacts, respondent's constituency, future participation plans, assistance with bill authorship, new political and community activities, and previous SHL membership.

The ordinal-level data were constructed from the following questions: age category was young, middle age, late middle age, young old age, or old old age; type of degree was elementary school diploma, junior high school diploma, high school diploma, two-year college degree, four-year college degree, graduate degree, or other. The respondents were asked to rate their health as better than average, about average, or worse than average. Income compared to their own income at age 55 and to that of others in the respondents' cohort was ranked as either better, the same, or worse.

The Silver Hairs rated their respect for politicians as very high, high, moderate, low, very low, or none. They also ranked their perceptions of the problems that the elderly face on the continuum of no problem, somewhat of a problem, very important problem, or most important problem. This question and ranking were duplicated from the statewide needs assessment survey.

The SHL member's political role in the community was compared to the member's political role in the community prior to SHL involvement. Thus, both questions concerning the member's political role were answered identically as the Silver Hairs categorized themselves as



decision maker, consciousness raiser, contributor, follower, or no part in the process.

Consequently, the 44 variables were utilized in analyses of the data from the Silver Haired Legislature questionnaires.

Several other variables were generated from the questionnaires sent to the state legislators and the 50 states directors. These variables are discussed more fully in Chapter VII.

### Summary

The information generated by the questionnaires and the data from the other sources previously discussed were sufficient to test the hypotheses specified in Chapter III. The findings as they relate to these hypotheses are discussed extensively in Chapter VII. Given the scarcity of research on the topic under investigation, it was difficult to utilize standardized measures or to employ measures from previous research. Considering the exploratory nature of this research and the lack of any previous investigation of the subject, it is held that the methods are a reasonable first approximation and enable the researcher to reach some valid, tentative conclusions.



## CHAPTER V THE SILVER HAired LEGISLATURE

### History/Development

The concept of a Silver Haired Legislature is attributed to William Cason, who was the president pro-tempore of the Missouri State Senate in 1973. He discussed the idea of a model legislative session with Tennie Ross, a recent retiree (Goeke and Wolfe, 1980). Together they patterned the Silver Haired Legislature upon a mock legislature sponsored by the Jaycees in Missouri. Shortly thereafter, a grant was made to the Missouri Jaycees from the Missouri Office on Aging to conduct the first Silver Haired Legislature in 1973. Since 1973, Missouri has conducted a Silver Haired Legislature session each year with considerable success as exemplified by the number of Silver Haired Legislature bills which have now become law.

The Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) is a mock legislative assembly of persons over the age of 60, and is concerned with issues confronting the elderly. The SHL was developed in an attempt to bridge the gap between the many and diverse groups speaking on behalf of the elderly. The Missouri Silver Haired Legislature was a catalyst for the state of Florida's adoption of the concept, although with several modifications. Bentley Lipscomb, the director of the Florida Office of Aging and Adult Services within the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, is credited with fostering the Silver Haired Legislature in Florida.



Florida's experience with the SHL began in 1978 with skepticism concerning its value, resentment from both professional groups and aging groups within the state, and lack of knowledge about such advocacy activities (Yoelin and Hamilton, 1979). Professional groups perceived their role as threatened and were convinced that their roles were sufficient for the advocacy of the elderly. Similarly, aging groups perceived the SHL as an attempt to supersede their own political efforts.

With the influence of the State Office of Aging and Adult Services, the Florida Council on Aging, and other supportive groups, the SHL became a reality in July, 1978. The following goals reflect the original intent of the SHL (Yoelin and Hamilton, 1979):

1. To provide an educational opportunity for the elderly to learn through participation in legislative activities
2. To increase the level of participation and involvement of retired professionals that may have no prior or continuing contact with older adult programs
3. To develop a collective awareness among older persons with regard to needs, issues, and policies that are of concern to them and their age cohorts
4. To stimulate community organization involvement with groups of older adults
5. To provide a stronger base for influencing policy which reflects the self-perceived needs of the older population.

Considerable promotional efforts kindled a statewide interest in the SHL. The Office of Aging and Adult Services assumed responsibility



for the organization and coordination of the SHL since the Older Americans Act, through Title III funds, provided the primary funding. In-kind contributions by state and volunteer groups were utilized as matching funds. Several organizations have contributed significantly to the SHL: the League of Women Voters, the Florida Jaycees, the Florida State University, and the Area Agencies on Aging. Continuance of the SHL has been permitted since the conducting of a Silver Haired legislative session was listed as a state objective in the 1979 Florida State Plan on Aging submitted to the United States Administration on Aging.

The study is primarily concerned with the 1980 Florida Silver Haired Legislature. Following the initial 1978 SHL session, organizational and procedural changes have been made each year to improve the functioning of the SHL. Therefore, one should be aware that each legislative session was not structurally the same. For the most part, the changes will not be discussed except where pertinent. It is noteworthy that the 1978 SHL was quite different from succeeding Silver Haired Legislatures. In 1978, the SHL consisted of 100 members who represented the state districts of the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS). This initial membership was open to all seniors over the age of 60. Subsequent participation, in the 1979 and 1980 SHLs, was limited to seniors over the age of 60 who were residents registered to vote in the state of Florida. Furthermore, individuals who were employed by the state and counties as service providers to the elderly were not permitted membership in an effort to avoid any conflict of interest. These restrictions to membership were adopted by the 1978 SHL and were aimed at excluding seniors who lived in



Florida for short periods of the year or individuals who already had access to advocacy channels, as in the case of service providers.

The SHL is innovative and will continue to modify its structure and processes, reflecting the development of the program. This is to be expected and demonstrates the SHL's commitment to its program. Numerous other changes will not be isolated for discussion. However, in discussing the 1980 SHL, it is necessary to describe the selection process of the 1979 SHL because members of the 1979 SHL were recalled to serve in the 1980 SHL.

The rationale for recalling the 1979 SHL was necessitated by the resignation of the officer in the Office of Aging and Adult Services who was responsible for the coordination of the SHL. A replacement was not secured until the final days of March, 1980. This change of personnel created a three-month vacuum in planning since the coordinator's position was vacant for that length of time. The primary planning that would have been completed during this three-month period was to result in the elections for the 1980 SHL. Rather than attempting to hurry the process of elections and risk incurring problems, and thus delay other planning, it was decided to recall the 1979 SHL. The operations of the 1980 SHL would have been severely hampered without this recall. The newly installed coordinator chose to make appointments where vacancies in the SHL existed. Usually the runner-up in the 1979 election for the vacant seat was appointed or an individual was appointed after consultation with local constituencies. Approximately twenty vacancies caused by deaths or inability or unwillingness to serve consecutive terms were filled in this manner.



This change of personnel had a twofold benefit for this research: (1) the SHL has given strong indications of wanting a two-year term and this opportunity permitted an evaluation of the two-year term rule based on experience; (2) the two-year term allows this research to include participants who have had longer commitments to the concept, which adds to the reliability of the research. Indeed, several of the hypotheses could not have been adequately tested without the two-term continuity.

Participation in the SHL membership began in March, 1979. At that time individuals who qualified for elective office secured petitions from various local groups, service providers, or the State Office of Aging and Adult Services. Each prospective candidate was required to obtain at least 100 signatures from persons over the age of 60 who resided in Florida. Both the candidate and petition signees were obligated to reside in the particular legislative district the nominee hoped to represent. For the 1979 SHL, nominees represented the legislative districts that composed the state legislature. This composition created a SHL of 160 members, 40 senators and 120 members of the house of representatives, the same number as in the Florida State Legislature. This representation reflects more accurately the legislative process and provides the SHL with several advantages. First, the process was expanded from the original 100 members in 1978 to include 160 members. Second, the representation was based on legislative districts as opposed to service districts. The former representation is based on a logic of homogeneity of the populace while the latter representation is based on the ability to provide services from a logistic point of centralization. The former is based on population and the latter was significantly



determined by geographical proximity. Third, representation similar to that of the state legislature permits a more realistic experience of the legislative process. And fourth, the identification as a Silver Hair from a legislative district enhances an identity with the counterpart in the state legislature. This relationship can be expanded to a number of potential functions including information gathering, public relations, advocacy, identification, lobbying, and so forth.

After the petition/nomination process was completed in March, the nominees were permitted to conduct campaigns in the manner they deemed necessary. As was expected, some campaigns were quite sophisticated, particularly in the high-density areas of elderly populations. Other nominees performed essentially no electioneering at all. The campaign process stimulated an interest in some areas, not only for the SHL concept but in the issues and concerns reflective of the respective constituencies.

Elections were conducted in May, 1979. The county supervisors of elections lent their support to the SHL by providing voting machines in many areas, and where the cooperation or practicality was not sufficient, paper ballots were employed. The League of Women Voters conducted the local SHL elections in conjunction with their own goals to increase political participation with a voter registration drive. This volunteerism exemplifies the participation of groups which contributed to the SHL's becoming a reality.

Several other states have conducted Silver Haired Legislatures, but the election process for the SHL in Florida adds a unique dimension to the concept. Prior to the convening of the 1979 Florida SHL, no



other states where a SHL has convened have elected their Silver Hairs. Florida's uniqueness broadens the attention given to the SHL and the elderly's concern throughout the state. The election process increases media coverage and allows an opportunity for the concerns of the elderly to be presented, discussed, debated, and popularized at the local level. Any new opportunity for advocacy must be accompanied by procedures for communication and diffusion, and the election fulfills this need. Thus, the SHL strengthens its concerns at the local level.

Issues relevant to the election process have given rise to considerable consternation among groups involved with the SHL as well as Silver Hairs themselves. Since the election process depends on extensive volunteerism throughout the state, the supervising and mechanics of the election have raised several problems. Ideally, the election should be conducted in a uniform manner. One solution has been to have the local election officials conduct the election either independently or in tandem with other elections. Two limitations have prevented the full employment of local election boards. Legal counsel to the supervisors of elections has raised opposition to a political entity's involvement in an election that is outside its jurisdiction. Essentially, a dangerous precedent could be set and could open the door to requests from a number of other groups to conduct an election. The other limitation is the cost of the election. Each local entity spends several thousands of dollars for an election, and this amount multiplied by the number of local election boards could cost well over \$100,000, which would exceed the total expenditure allotted for the SHL.



A satisfactory solution to the election process is actively being sought for future Silver Haired Legislatures. In any event, the 1979 elections were criticized because of variation in procedures and because the election process was not representative across the state. Some polling places were inconveniently located, a shortage of ballots occurred in some areas, votes were challenged, and there were charges of unfair campaign tactics. The utilization of different groups, however well intentioned, to supervise the elections merely raises different problems. This is evidenced by the criticisms of both elections, the 1978 election conducted by the Jaycees and the 1979 election conducted by the League of Women Voters. Yet the 1979 election attracted over 95,000 votes across the state, an increase of over 83,000 votes from the prior election. The number of votes cast can be considered an indicator for the identification of the SHL by the elderly as an impacting and important advocacy group. This recognition is influential for the continuance and further development of the SHL concept. State support for the SHL is unlikely to diminish due to a growing interest in the SHL by the elderly in the state.

As previously discussed, the 1979 election results were applied to the formulation of the 1980 SHL, except for the appointments made for vacancies. Requests to the Silver Haired Legislators for the 1980 term were made in April, 1980, with the majority of positions filled by May, 1980. Because of illness or death of Silver Hairs, a few appointments were made as late as July, 1980. With the membership in place, a package of necessary organizational information was sent to all Silver Hairs. This package included the procedure for the drafting



of legislation. Upon receipt, many Silver Hairs began their own processes for bill drafting. In several sections of the state, particularly where large numbers of the elderly reside, namely, Dade, Broward, Duval, and Pinellas Counties, caucuses of Silver Hairs were meeting to delineate tasks and to plan strategies for the 1980 SHL session. Organizations involving grass-roots politics did not limit themselves to the period of time after appointments for their activities, nor were they from the densely populated areas of the elderly only. For instance, a rural southern district of Florida representing part or all of eight counties began in January, 1980, to formulate concerns for the SHL. This group had leadership from the state legislators of the district and the current and former Silver Hairs of the district. They conducted open meetings of interested citizens that generated 16 suggestions for the 1980 SHL. Likewise, other areas of the state conducted regular meetings to encourage communication and an awareness of the SHL. At the other end of the continuum were Silver Hairs in some sections of the state who relied solely on each Silver Hair's individual effort.

#### Preliminary Processes

The major goal of the SHL is legislation. The initial step in the legislative process is the offering of bills by the Silver Hairs. The procedures for drafting legislation were received by the Silver Hairs approximately two months prior to the annual session, and they were requested to submit bills for introduction to the SHL five weeks prior to the session. All bills received by the state coordinator of the SHL were forwarded to the staff of the house of representatives and the senate bill drafting departments. These senate and house staff



members performed several important functions with the draft version of each bill. The bills were scrutinized for clarity, intent, and redundancy with other legislation. The bills then were rewritten in the standardized manner acceptable to the state legislature. Efforts were made to ensure that draft bills' rewritten forms, called prefiled bills, were of similar purpose to the original intent. This process utilizes the highly specialized expertise of staff members to certify the Silver Haired legislation as presentable to the state legislature. This editing allows for greater clarity of issues when presented and decreases the amount of time needed for further rewriting or restating of intent. Other lobbying efforts must secure this expertise from other sources, if at all. It should be noted that almost all legislation passed by the SHL is rewritten after state legislators have agreed to sponsor the bills. However, the important points are that the SHL's bills approximate the final language and have the benefit of the additional filtering process.

Upon return to the coordinator's office, the bills are retyped on a contractual basis with Florida State University and assigned to one of the five legislative committees. The Silver Hairs volunteered for committees, but all choices could not be accommodated. Second choices were employed followed by random committee assignments. The coordinator also assigned each bill to a committee. Some bills were assigned to a committee which had only tangential jurisdiction; however, if the coordinator did not evenly distribute the workload among committees, the time parameters of the SHL would not be met. Some committees would have an insurmountable task to accomplish while other committees would have only a few bills to consider. This committee assignment of bills



allows for an equitable amount of time for each bill when it is considered in committee. The number of committees was five: commerce and consumer protection, education, finance and tax, general legislation, and health and social services. Each chamber of the SHL, the house of representatives and the senate, had a counterpart committee for a total of 10 committees.

For the 1980 SHL, 100 bills were submitted to the state coordinator's office. This contrasts with 135 bills submitted in 1979. The deadline date for the bills was June 11, 1980, and 89 bills met this deadline. The remaining 11 bills were accepted late only with the cooperation and additional efforts of the state legislature staff. The state legislature staff also provided a summary of each bill which briefly stated (1) a summary of the present situation and probable effects of the proposed changes, (2) the economic impact and fiscal notes, and (3) additional comments relative to the similar effects of other legislation, legality, implementation schedule, and other pertinent information known to the staff. Of the 100 bills, 26 were assigned to the commerce and consumer protection committee, 13 to the education committee, 26 to the health and social services committee, 19 to the general legislation committee, and 16 to the finance and tax committee.

Approximately half of the prefiled bills are concerned with health in various degrees. Other dominant concerns are crime, housing, and utilities. Below is a list of the titles for the prefiled bills. This list provides the type of concerns presented by the SHL. Some of the prefiled bills are denoted either as resolutions or as memorials. The definitional distinctions are unclear, but, in general, a resolution



states a concern without a solution included (as a bill would include), and a memorial is a statement forwarded to agencies, usually at the federal level and outside the legislative impact of the state of Florida.

### Silver-Haired Legislature List of Prefiled Bills

#### SHL No.

1. Telephone Solicitation
2. Home Repair
3. Older Physician License
4. Relief from Duplication of Insurance Policies
- 4a. Protection of Public Utility Customers
5. Retirement and Health Insurance
6. Mobile Home Parks Rents
7. Health Insurance
8. Energy-Billboard Lighting
9. Energy-Waste Wood
10. Retirement
11. Pharmaceutical Assistance
12. Mobile Home Park Rents
13. Regulation of Public Utilities
14. Utility Rates
15. Utility Bills for Elderly
16. Electric Rates Break for Elderly
17. Electric Utility Rates
18. Habitual Felony Offenders
19. Motor Vehicle Liability Insurance
20. Surplus Foods to Poor Countries
21. Return of Beverage Containers
22. Public Utility Matters of Residential Customers
23. Issuance of I.D. Cards
24. (Resolution) Decrease Utility Rates
25. (Memorial) Land for National Veterans Cemetery
26. Geriatric Education
27. Geriatric Chair in Medical Schools
28. Nurse Assistant (Aide) Training
29. SHL—Permanent Body
30. Training Program for Physical Assistance to Handicapped or Disabled Adults
31. SHL—Permanent Body
32. School Superintendents
33. School Breakfast Program
34. Employment and Training of Elderly
35. Election of SHL Members
36. (Resolution) Cutting Red Tape in Government Agencies
37. (Resolution) Charter for SHL
38. (Resolution) Training in Skills for Employment



39. Children at Mental Hospitals
40. Social Service Stamps
41. Denturistry
42. Mental Health Facilities
43. Department of Aging
44. Terminally Ill Persons
45. Handicapped Access
46. Half-way Housing for Elderly
47. Labeling of Drugs
48. Medicaid-Nursing Homes
49. SSI Benefits in Nursing Homes
50. Medical Assistance
51. Funds for Medical Expenses
52. Care for Terminally Ill
53. Bill for Medical Service
54. Regional Medical Clinics for the Elderly
55. Disaster Evaluation of Disabled
56. Frail Elderly Group Home
57. Hospital Cost Containment
58. Medicaid Benefit Eligibility
59. Care of Children
60. Senior Committee
61. (Resolution) Amend CCE Act
62. (Memorial) Medicare
63. (Memorial) Congress to Not Reduce Social Security
64. County Gerontology Clinics
65. State Emergency Evaluation
66. Pedestrian Cross Walks
67. Low Income Housing
68. Crime—Elderly
69. Reduced Bus Fares
70. Medical Expense Discount
71. Bicycle License
72. Prescription Drug Plan
73. Guardianship
74. Trans-Pay Differential for State Employees
75. Bus Rides
76. Guardianship
77. Cemetery Regis.
78. Pharmaceutical Assistance
79. Mandatory Retire. Based on Age
80. (Resolution) Initiative Power
81. (Resolution) Transportation and the Elderly
82. (Resolution) Unicameral Legislature
83. (Resolution) New Legislative Procedures
84. State Lottery
85. Tax Relief
86. Interest on Loans
87. Tax Relief
88. Motor Fuel Taxes Public Transit
89. Property Tax Relief
90. Hospital Cost Containment



91. Retirement Cost of Living Increase
92. (Resolution) State Income Tax
93. (Resolution) Homestead Exemption
94. (Resolution) Sale Tax
95. (Resolution) Taxation-Legislative Approval
96. (Resolution) Reverse Mortgages
97. (Resolution) Second Gas Tax
98. (Resolution) Fla. Rental Housing Finance Authority
99. (Memorial) Tax Relief
100. (Memorial) Excess-Earnings Penalty

The state coordinator for the SHL met with the 1979 SHL leadership in June, 1980, to finalize organizational matters. The leadership was composed of the following persons elected by the 1979 SHL membership: the speaker and speaker pro tem of the house of representatives, the president and president pro tem of the senate, and the chairman of the 10 committees, 5 from each chamber.

#### Budget

The primary source of funding for the SHL is from the Title III funds of the Older Americans Act as revised. Title III accounts for approximately 75 percent of the cost and the remaining 25 percent is from the general revenues for administration of the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS). A definitive breakdown of the total budget for the 1980 SHL is not available and the total cost may never fare better than an approximation. An estimated \$60,000 was expended for the travel and per diem of the SHL; another \$40,000 was budgeted for the state coordinator's salary, one secretary, and office expenses. However, SHL activities are not the sole tasks for the state personnel. These items and the related expenses of typing contracts, supplies, printing, and numerous other line items generated a conservatively estimated budget of over \$120,000 for the 1980 Silver Haired Legislature. The estimated budget for the



1981 SHL was approximately \$130,000. This budget does not include other costly items such as the use of the state capital building for the session or salaries of over 40 HRS employees who, while the SHL is in session, assume various tasks such as registering members, typing, bill coordination, and serving as committee aides and ushers. Technically, this group of state employees are volunteers, because their work duties during the four days the SHL is in session are supposedly completed on their personal time in order to allow them to allocate their work time to SHL activities. Essentially, the state employees were to allocate an equivalent of four days' work for their volunteer efforts which were during work hours. In reality, an unknown figure for these salaries should be allotted to the SHL expenditures. Two other employees of the state legislature contributed substantially of their time to the operation of the SHL. The secretary of the senate and the clerk of the house of representatives and their staffs were carrying out their duties of interpreting rules, offering advice, recording statements, and operating the technical equipment in the voting processes as though their respective employers, the state legislature, were present.

#### The 1980 Silver Haired Legislature Session

This section is a narrative of the Silver Haired Legislature's activities during the period July 27 to July 31, 1980. The 1980 SHL met as an entity for the first time on Sunday, July 27, in Tallahassee, the capital city of Florida. Registration and subsequent meetings on this day were held in a hotel near the capitol building where most of the Silver Hairs were lodged. Agendas, committee assignments, a folder



containing the prefiled bills, bill summaries, and other types of information were distributed at registration. It is important to know that the registration period is the first time for the Silver Hairs to obtain the complete set of bills which they are to deliberate. The registration area was crowded and the SHL group was very social. Conversations and discussions focused on social amenities and a few policy matters. The observer judged the group to be healthy, vital, articulate, well dressed, and in a jovial mood.

The first work session was convened at 2:00 P.M. and was entitled "Orientation and Advocacy Workshop." A full agenda for the Silver Haired Legislature is discussed in this chapter. The orientation session was chaired by the state coordinator, and after brief welcoming remarks and presentation of the agenda, questions from the floor were entertained. After the first question for clarification of the agenda, another person voiced opposition to this research study of the SHL on the grounds that it invaded the privacy of Silver Hairs, and he requested a motion of formal opposition. There was a small applause of support, and this investigator began to believe his research had ended before it had even begun. The mood appeared to snowball when the questioner stated that the Silver Hairs are not guinea pigs and several hands waved for recognition as the applause grew louder. Several Silver Hairs rose to support the research as necessary for continuance of the SHL concept. The mood shifted and the group dispensed with format and shouted for the questioner to sit down, shut up, and merely refuse to cooperate in the voluntary endeavor of the research. An overwhelming applause was given for the latter comments. The scene



symbolized the spontaneity and seriousness of the group. The state coordinator voiced support for the research and stressed the positive aspects of the study. The issue was resolved within a 10-minute time span. The letter of introduction sent to all Silver Hairs stimulated the opposition and yet at the same time served as a basis for the majority's support. This situation motivated this investigator to attempt as many personal contacts as possible during the session. The opposition scenario had a serendipity effect because considerable information and the high return rate of the questionnaire, discussed later, could be attributed to the situation.

The remainder of the orientation session was directed to serious questions as well as unnecessary or trivial comments which were met with boos and hisses from the audience. The group appeared attentive although several Silver Hairs arrived late for the session. Shopping appeared to be a prior concern for some of the group since approximately 40 shopping bags from a local department store were carried into the room by the audience. Obviously, everyone did not feel compelled to scrutinize the information received at registration.

Workshops were next on the agenda. The original and former director of the Division of Aging in Florida discussed the value of Silver Haired lobbyists and the importance of year-round lobbying techniques.

The second workshop was composed of four Silver Hairs who discussed goals and objectives of the SHL. Several issues discussed by this group demonstrated clear and logical concerns for the future of the SHL. Among the items addressed were the necessity for a SHL charter



to institutionalize the SHL in Florida; interaction with other states who have conducted SHLs; public relations for the SHL; the identification of the demographics and needs of Florida's elderly; the financing of the SHL, particularly the election process; the length of terms for Silver Hairs; the importance of SHL independence from other organized lobby groups, and the role of a Silver Hair in the community. The resolutions for these concerns are essential to the future of the SHL.

The third workshop explained the strategy for developing SHL district task forces. The presentation was based on the experiences of a southern district of the state comprising eight rural counties. The Silver Hairs and state legislators met in local forums in different localities to generate communication between representatives and constituents. The presenter encouraged formation of other "grass roots foundations" which would eventually develop the finances to support the SHL. The primary goals of this strategy are to organize a network of concerned citizens at the local level to increase political involvement and to develop a SHL organization that is increasingly independent of public funding and regulation. The receptiveness to the "grass roots foundation" was cordial but defensive. Silver Hairs from various districts in the state acknowledged the potential for this type of grass roots participation but stressed the importance of the heterogeneity between districts and the resulting differences in levels and forms of participation. The uniformity of a local SHL structure is not any more applicable, they argued, than each state legislator duplicating a specific structure for local input. Again, some issues such as finance, participation, roles of SHLs, and terms of office were



raised which undoubtedly demonstrate the identification of crucial organizational issues by the SHL. Both the Silver Hairs and State Office personnel are cognizant of the need for a formalized structure for the SHL. The first two SHLs constructively expanded the concept of the SHL and the organization now must evaluate its evolvement for a more stable period to follow.

The final workshop of the afternoon was sponsored by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and was entitled "Crime Prevention Measures." The workshop's intent was to focus on one of the predominant problems confronting the elderly and Silver Hairs. An FBI agent presented a summary of statistics and an overview of the crime situation but offered no substantial alternative as a solution. The Silver Hairs explored the possibilities offered by existing programs in the ensuing discussion period and probed for guidance to reduce the impact of crime. The audience seemed perturbed by the lack of effectiveness by the speaker to offer any innovations.

After a dinner break, the evening session convened at 7:40 P.M. with a formal opening ceremony. The group sang the national anthem, an invocation followed, the director of Aging and Adult Services extended a welcome, and telegram greetings were read from Florida congressmen. Although telegram greetings are usually only a formality, the congressmen recognize the SHL as an important constituency and expressed the desire to be present although unable as a result of the continuing session of the United States Congress. Put in another perspective, this gathering of less than 200 people captured the attention of important political leaders.



The chairman of the Florida House of Representatives' Subcommittee on Aging was next on the agenda. He summarized the success of the SHL and described the legislation passed by the state legislature of import to the elderly. In effect, he delivered a keynote speech encouraging the Silver Hairs to be selective and to consider the financing of legislation as well as the goals of potential laws. He reinforced the necessity for year-round lobby efforts to increase legislative success.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 P.M. and several caucuses formed. In all, at least three groups met accounting for approximately 60 Silver Hairs. With the traveling to Tallahassee and a long and hectic day, it was surprising to see individuals voluntarily extending their day to discuss issues, strategies, and the elections of the SHL leadership to be conducted the following Monday. The individuals discussed their responsibility for extensive reading in order to become knowledgeable about the prefiled bills. These caucuses fit well the description of the backroom politiking common to American politics. They also demonstrate the commitment the Silver Hairs attach to their tasks.

Beginning with the Monday, July 28, session, the SHL met in the State Capitol. The environment of the house and senate chambers provided an attractive atmosphere for the Silver Hairs and further encouraged the approximate behavior of legislators. The Silver Hairs sit at the desks of their state legislative counterparts.

The opening ceremonies and further conduct were patterned after state legislature demeanor. The secretary of the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services addressed the full SHL, which was assembled



in the house chamber for the joint session. He stated that \$80,000 from Title III monies was designated for the SHL and pledged continued support for future SHLs.

The governor of the state addressed the group pledging the support of the executive branch because the SHL represents elderly Floridians whose concerns are those of all Floridians. With the conclusion of the governor's speech, the lobby area was filled with reporters and media personnel interviewing Silver Hairs for their respective media. The morning break coincided with the media event in order to maximize the public relations created by the governor's presence.

After the break, the 1979 SHL senate president and speaker of the house of representatives addressed the 1980 SHL. Since the speaker's presentation was one of the most complete summaries of the 1978 and 1979 SHL sessions, it is included here for comparative purposes.

The 1978 SHL passed 15 concerns and the 1979 SHL passed 30 concerns. Seven of the 1978 concerns were duplicated by the 1979 SHL for a total of 38 issues. Five of the issues were referred to agencies or individuals representing non-Florida decision-making bodies, for example, the United State Congress. Another five concerns were transmitted to various Florida agencies for administrative action. Sponsors were sought in the state legislature for introduction of the remaining 24 issues. Four issues were not deemed appropriate for legislative action. Eight of the 24 issues failed the legislative process and 16 have been incorporated into statutes of the state of Florida.



The administrative responses resulted in the following:

1. Creation of a House Sub-Committee on Aging.
2. Senior citizen representation on public policy boards, councils, and commissions
3. Equitable distribution of Title XX funds; the elderly have consistently increased the amount of dollars for programs relative to their needs
4. Creation of a state plan to reduce crimes against the elderly
5. Continuance of the Silver Haired Legislature.

The 16 statutes had the following effects:

1. Expanded health and dental benefits to medicaid eligible persons of all ages
2. Establishment of a hospital cost containment commission
3. Establishment of a transportation coordinating council for all of the state's disadvantaged
4. Expanded funding for community care for the elderly
5. Waiver of fees and academic prerequisites for older Floridians to attend state community colleges and universities on a space available basis
6. Regulation of adult congregate living facilities
7. Rights of mobile home owners to peaceably assemble
8. Legislative review of children in foster care
9. Increased homestead exemptions
10. Increased benefits for state retirees
11. Cost-of-living adjustment for state retirees



12. Regulation of condominium conversion
13. Regulation of Health insurance, particularly disclosure and medigap insurance
14. Establishment of a method of inventory of the state's disabled citizens who would require assistance in emergency evacuation
15. Property tax relief
16. Electric utility rate relief and energy-related assistance for older Floridians.

The chairman of the House Committee on Health and Rehabilitative Services (to whom the sub-committee on aging reports) spoke next on the commitment of the legislature to concerns of the aging. He noted the productivity of this committee in this regard.

By 11:00 A.M., the SHL senate and house membership assembled in their respective chambers to become acquainted with the rules and protocol of their chambers. The secretary of the senate and clerk of the house explained the processes of the state legislature. They both suggested that rules are guidelines, and pointed to the need of the Silver Hairs to adopt those rules which were applicable and to institute others that would facilitate meeting SHL goals and time constraints.

After the luncheon recess, the chambers met to elect their leadership: for the house, the speaker and speaker pro tem, and for the senate, the president and president pro tem. The house passed a motion limiting the leadership to two terms of office. The election process created an awareness of the need to institute rules limiting the nomination and candidates' speeches. The house session bordered on chaos



when the convener solicited suggested rules from the floor. With 120 members present, almost half had a suggestion, but the approximate hour of scheduled time for the election did not permit everyone's recognition. The convener ruled a specific time constraint and the election proceeded and was completed.

In the late afternoon session, a meeting of the five joint house and senate committees was scheduled. Little direction was given to these committee sessions and the five groups expressed displeasure with the format. The committees were supposed to attempt a calendar for those bills that fell within their purview. With no chair elected, each committee resorted to its own standards. One committee reduced its workload by prioritizing the bills, another committee adjourned early in futility, the third discussed procedures with no resolvment, the fourth familiarized itself with the bills, and the fifth discussed an array of topics. The confusion of the joint committees was a catalyst for Silver Hairs to recognize the need for strict regulation of time for specific tasks if their task was to be accomplished. Several individuals utilized the time to campaign for the chair positions of their committees.

During the evening, the SHL hosted a reception for the governor's wife in return for her support and for her hosting a reception for the 1979 SHL.

The majority of Tuesday, the second day of the SHL session, was set aside for the committee deliberation in each chamber. The first order of business for each committee was the election of a chair. The Office of Aging and Adult Services provided staff to act as recorders



and to perform the various functions of advisor, facilitator, communicator, and other necessary duties. The state staff demonstrated a deep concern and performed valuable services for the committees. These state employees were articulate and represented middle management positions in the state bureaucracy.

The SHL committees' first priority was to set an agenda and to establish procedures for reviewing the bills in their jurisdiction. Criteria became important because each committee was responsible for reporting a maximum of three bills out of committee to their chambers, although some committees eventually reported a few more. The Silver Haired Legislature rules mandated that only bills reported out of committee would be considered. With a total of 10 separate committees, there was the possibility that 30 to 40 different bills could be debated by the SHL. This constraint was a result of the short time duration for the SHL. This procedure presented a major impasse. For instance, if bill "A" was reported out of the House Committee on Health and Social Services and the senate counterpart committee chose not to report it out, could the senate consider the bill after it passed the full House? A bill had to have passed both chambers to become a SHL priority. This impasse is peculiar to the SHL because the state legislature would have liaisons and joint committee hearings to communicate between the two chambers. Furthermore, the state legislature has weeks or months to consider legislation. Of greater importance to the SHL is the possibility, which occurred, for bill "A" to pass the house committee and simultaneously have the senate pass a modified version of bill "A". The difference necessitates available time to negotiate a resolution.



The leadership, comprised of all elected Silver Hairs, decided that it was sufficient to have a committee from either chamber to report on a bill before both chambers could consider it. The house speaker appointed a house Whip to act as a liaison between the two chambers, and his role was to communicate decisions to the leadership of each chamber. These decisions bridged the communication gap, but the time lags and short sessions left little time for bargaining between committees. This resulted in some legislation not becoming priority issues. A specific example will be discussed in a later section.

In general, the committee members were well informed and maintained a sophisticated discussion of the issues before them. This observer noted an extensive amount of facts and logic presented with every bill. Each committee attempted to analyze thoroughly each bill. At the other end of the spectrum, some Silver Hairs seemed bewildered with the process. One example occurred in the House Committee on Health and Social Services. When a vote was being tabulated, a voice from the rear of the room inquired why his vote was not counted. The chair responded by stating that only committee members were permitted to vote. The visitor stated that he was a Silver Hair and on the committee. After investigation, the visitor was instructed that he was on another committee in the senate. The visitor could not understand the difference. While observing the Senate Education Committee later in the afternoon, the chair of the committee mentioned the day-long absence of a member. The visitor from the house session just described stated that he was present all day but felt more comfortable sitting in the audience. This beleaguered individual was obviously less than a full participant.



The late morning session was a joint session of the senate and the house to hear the associate director of the White House Conference on Aging scheduled for 1981. He outlined and described the plans for the White House Conference. The Silver Hairs appreciated the information sessions but voiced concerns about their consumption of time. In fact, the SHL membership requested fewer presentations for the 1980 session than were conducted in previous sessions.

The afternoon session continued with committee meetings. The total amount of time allotted for committee meetings was originally four hours. However, the leadership postponed the late afternoon general session to permit more committee time. The committee discussions were professional and could have easily been mistaken for state legislative sessions. Each chamber's elected leadership met as a rules committee to set the agenda for the legislative sessions. The senate committee reported out a total of 15 issues from the following committees:

Finance and Taxation	- 2
General Legislation	- 3
Commerce and Consumer Protection	- 3
Education	- 4
Health and Social Services	- 3

The House scheduled 32 issues on its agenda. The House committee breakdowns were as follows:

Finance and Taxation	4
General Legislation	- 10
Commerce and Consumer Protection	- 6



Education - 5

Health and Social  
Services - 7

There was consensus on eight issues between counterpart committees of both chambers. The discrepancies were considerable at this point. The leadership scheduled a joint rules committee meeting for one hour prior to the following morning general session.

On Tuesday evening a banquet for SHL members and volunteers associated with the SHL was held. The guest speaker was the regional director for the Social Security Administration. A dance concluded the evening festivities with sparse attendance by the Silver Hairs.

Wednesday's session began with a joint rules committee meeting. The senate president and president pro tem chose to represent the senate, and the five senate chairmen were not present. As an observer of all the committees and their deliberations, this investigator concluded that the absence of the full senate leadership resulted in a lack of communication and a decrease of cooperation among SHL members. The subsequent orchestration of the bills through the two chambers was impaired.

To maximize congruity between the chambers, it was decided to debate first the eight issues reported by similar committees of both chambers. A 30-minute time limit was set for each bill. As each bill passed a chamber, the Whip of the house and president pro tem of the senate were responsible for sending the bill to the opposite chamber for consideration. The committee chairman whose committee reviewed the bill presented the bill to the entire chamber unless the floor was yielded to the bill's sponsor or floor manager.



The house quickly passed three bills after convening at 8:35 A.M. When the fourth bill was introduced, a discussion developed over a word usage. The appropriateness of the word gerontology or geriatrics was debated. This incident is herein reported to demonstrate the case where a bill could be referred to committee were it not for time constraints. The SHL would end the next day and no further committee meetings were scheduled. Therefore, these types of debates, whether for technical grounds or concerning a bills' intent, used considerable time of the full chamber. Opposition also ensued when a Silver Hair rose to end the debate by moving the previous question which would end the debate, while others still expressed an interest to debate the bill. These technical procedural issues caused consternation since no rules were established regarding either how individuals or which individuals were to be recognized. This type of discussion creates division and disorganization in the SHL.

By mid-morning the senate debated a bill creating a state lottery in Florida. The bill failed by one vote, but the important characteristic was the eloquence and respect with which the Silver Hairs debated. Each side presented themselves well, and this observer noted that the debate was performed as well as an off-Broadway play. The scene contained humor, drama, sorrow, and mystery with an exciting outcome. The Silver Hairs represented the strengths of the democratic process.

The following example epitomizes the lack of cooperation between the chambers. Shortly before lunch both chambers passed bills establishing the SHL as a permanent body of advocacy for senior citizens. Until 1980, the SHL was continued as part of the state's administrative plan; consequently, the Silver Hairs desired a statute requiring SHL



permanence to ensure continuity. Several prefiled bills dealt with this issue. The senate passed the combined bills numbers 29, 31, and 35 while the house passed bill number 29. Unless both chambers passed the same bill, it could not become a priority of the 1980 SHL. One of the early items on the afternoon agendas was resolution 37, a resolution petitioning the governor to create a SHL charter committee, which passed both chambers. This resolution was to be communicated to the governor immediately. Unfortunately, no one was in the Office of the Governor to accept the request. By mid-afternoon the HRS staff had become involved with the bills that dealt with the continuance issue. The HRS staff was concerned that the bill and resolution would cause the governor to be presured by the SHL. At 3:25 P.M. one high ranking HRS staff member informed me that the bills concerned with the continuance of the SHL would not become a priority issue of the 1980 SHL. This appears to be an example of interference against the stated policy of non-interference with the internal deliberations of the SHL. As one might note, no bill calling for the continuance of the SHL became a priority of the 1980 SHL despite an overwhelming consensus for such legislation. The plot of this issue resurfaced on Thursday.

The senate's debate progressed more quickly than the house's deliberations, due primarily to the smaller size of the senate. The day-long session was a tiring affair, and at times persons demonstrated their disgust with the grueling schedule. The Silver Hairs represented their constituencies with vigor and passion. Wednesday evening was spent by most Silver Hairs discussing, politiking, and preparing for the final session. The formal debate of the day-long session was subsidized by continuing conversations among Silver Hairs and negotiating by the



floor managers for the bills they represented in order to maximize the possibility of their passage.

The Thursday, July 31, session began with a meeting of the joint rules committee. The primary concern was the procedures for debating too many bills with less than three hours remaining. The different versions of the SHL continuance bills were discussed, and the chair of the house committee who reviewed the bill was livid. He accused the senate leadership of reneging on a compromise by not passing the House version of the bill. He expressed his intention to rectify the matter with new legislation. He led a subsequent movement to present to the house another version of the continuance bill that was acceptable to the senate. This version passed the house unanimously, but the senate had already adjourned without having the opportunity to vote on it. Essentially, the SHL did not pass any priority bill that called for the SHL continuance even though most Silver Hairs believed it to be a priority issue.

The house also had difficulty defining the difference between resolutions and bills in the rules committee meeting. The senate passed some prefiled bills as bills and the house passed the bills as resolutions. These scenarios further indicate the necessity for the SHL to codify its procedures and increase its communication channels between the leadership.

By 8:30 A.M. both chambers were in full session. The pace was hectic and the debates were hurried. Constraining time even further, several state legislators and other dignitaries visited the SHL and were formally recognized. The SHL carefully reviewed each bill's intent



as well as the potential of its passage in the state legislature. Particular attention was given to each bill's cost and financing. The SHL guards its reputation for being responsible and was careful not to support legislation that might prove embarrassing.

By 11:00 A.M. the joint session was opened for the purpose of ending the 1980 SHL. The director of the State Office of Aging and Adult Services pledged continuing support, the coordinator thanked the Silver Hairs for their cooperation, and the senate president and house speaker gave brief remarks. After a closing prayer, the traditional dropping of a white handkerchief by the eldest member symbolized the end of the session.

A press conference of HRS staff and SHL leaders was held after lunch.

### Results

The 1980 session of the Florida Silver Haired Legislature passed 18 issues: 12 bills, 1 resolution, and 5 memorials. Brief summaries of the bills follow:

1. Mobile Home Parks Rent - defines and prohibits "unconscionable rents" by mobile park owners to any tenant. The bill specifies the legal process for tenants.
2. Mandatory Retirement - prohibits involuntary retirement in the private sector for reasons other than inability to perform a job.
3. Denturity - establishes a licensing procedure for the practice of denturity.



4. County Geriatric Clinics - establishes clinics for the elderly within county health departments.
5. Geriatric Education - provides a program to educate physicians and nurses in geriatric medicine.
6. Halfway Houses for the Elderly - establishes halfway houses for senior citizens who have had medical episodes which no longer require hospital or nursing home care but do require some additional short-term convalescence before returning to independent living.
7. Consolidation of Health Care Services - requires the primary care physician or institution to be responsible for the preparation of a comprehensive bill for senior citizens, including consultation fees and additional medical provider's services.
8. Limit/Lower Senior Citizens' Utility Rates - requests a study to investigate the feasibility of implementing reduced rates for low income persons' utilities.
9. Crime Against the Elderly - provides for a minimum mandatory sentence for any person who commits certain crimes against an elderly or handicapped person.
10. Habitual Felony Offenders - provides no option for adjudication of guilt, probation, or parole for felony offenders who have committed certain crimes more than twice.
11. Relief from Duplication of Insurance Policies - provides for insurance policies to be written in clear, everyday language in a two-page format with important points underscored. No



policy is effective if the insuree already has three similar policies.

12. Medicaid Nursing Homes - requires nursing homes to have specific training for aides, medicaid reimbursements which are computed similarly to medicare payments, social services for residents, and medicaid reimbursement of more than one physician visit per month.

The one resolution requests the Florida Rental Housing Authority to stimulate the building of rental units.

Five memorials were passed, summarized as follows:

1. Land for National Veterans Cemetery in Florida - urges the president of the United States to make available the funds to develop a national cemetery in Florida
2. Energy Billboard Lighting/Waste Wood Utilization - requests the federal government to prohibit lighting of highway billboard signs and allows individuals to glean waste wood on public lands to conserve energy.
3. Medicare - requests the United States Congress to remove restrictions on in-patient hospital care under certain conditions.
4. Congress To Not Reduce Social Security - requests the United States Congress to reject any proposal that would effectively reduce the cost of living adjustments of Social Security.
5. Excess Earnings Penalty - requests the United States Congress to abolish the excess earnings penalty of the Social Security Act.



The next major tasks for the Silver Hairs were to lobby for their priority issues and communicate with their constituents the SHL's concerns. The state office compiled a proceedings document which was sent to all Silver Hairs, state legislators, the governor, cabinet, congressmen, and other interested persons. The leaders of the SHL, with the assistance of state personnel, communicate the resolution and memorials to appropriate persons. The leadership coordinates the lobbying effort among Silver Hairs. They track the issues to ensure that all or as many as possible have sponsors in the state legislature. The Silver Hairs are encouraged to track the priority issues themselves, coordinate local lobby efforts, and request their counterparts in the legislature to sponsor bills. The activities of the Silver Hairs are discussed more fully in Chapter VIII. However, the activities range from Silver Hairs temporarily moving to or visiting Tallahassee during the state legislative session to lobby and also offering committee testimony to an almost nil effort.

Increasing consideration is given to grass roots lobbying by the Silver Hairs. As the SHL concept has developed, it is the lobby role experiencing the greatest change. Essentially, the SHL concept was not planned as a lobby effort and some individuals carefully disassociate the lobby aspect from the SHL for two reasons. Some feel that funding would be jeopardized since the SHL is funded as an advocacy group in consonance with Title III regulations. Others consider the SHL to have a special function other than lobbying, which should be kept separate, and believe that lobbying is a task for other groups or individual efforts. Each of these groups considers the lobby effort to be



separate from the SHL concept and views any lobby effort to be the efforts of individuals who happen to be Silver Hairs.



CHAPTER VI  
THE SILVER HAIRS: CHARACTERISTICS, ROLES, AND BEHAVIORS

Description

This chapter focuses on the results of the survey and describes the characteristics, roles, and behaviors of the Silver Haired legislators. Of the 160 potential Silver Haired respondents, 139 returned the questionnaire. Percentages tabulated from the questionnaire responses are rounded to the nearest tenth. Some percentages are based on fewer than the total number of responses because, as in most survey research, some questions were not answered.

The mean age of the Silver Hairs sample was 71 years with a range of 58 to 87 years. Over 70 percent were between the ages of 65 and 75. The sample was comprised of persons who were born in 27 states and 11 foreign countries: 5 states—New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, and Georgia—accounted for the birthplaces of 45.8 percent of the respondents; Florida was the birthplace of 8 percent; and 13.9 percent were foreign born. Approximately 53 percent had resided in Florida less than 20 years, and 30 percent had resided in Florida less than 10 years. The respondents reported their average longest residency in one place as 42 years. A variety of countries and states were given as the place of longest residency. Such characteristics would be atypical for other states, but Florida has experienced a large immigration since World War II, particularly from northeastern and midwestern states, its geographic location making it attractive to the elderly as a place to retire.



Several demographic facts indicated that the Silver Hairs were unrepresentative of the general elderly population in Florida (Table 2).

Table 2  
Demographic Characteristics of the Silver Hairs and  
Florida's General Elderly Population

	Silver Hairs	Florida's elderly <sup>a</sup>
Male/female ratio	59%/41%	42%/58%
Married	64%	57%
Widowed	23.7%	36%
Divorced	7.2%	3%
Mean income (monthly)	\$1,285	\$473 <sup>b</sup>
Income under \$6,000 per year	13.7%	72.3%

<sup>a</sup>Kraft and Osterbind's (1981) elderly population is defined as over 65 whereas the Silver Haired population includes persons over the age of 60.

<sup>b</sup>1975 data.

Between the Silver Hairs and Florida's general elderly population, the male/female ratio may explain the lower incidence of widowhood among the Silver Hairs since lower rates of widowhood in a male-skewed sample are predictable.

Osterbind (1980) reported that approximately 12 percent of the elderly over the age of 60 were employed full or part time in 1978. This employment rate was scattered among several occupational categories: service workers, craftsmen, and kindred workers; sales, clerical, and kindred workers; managers and administrators; and professional, technical, and kindred workers. About 20 percent of the



Silver Haired respondents are employed. The areas of education, real estate, service agency, sales, and journalism accounted for 60 percent of the employment positions.

The Silver Hairs listed 33 different occupations as their main vocation during their work careers. The field of education accounted for the largest number of respondents, comprising 21.8 percent of the sample. Other occupations, each comprising 5 to 10 percent of the sample, are listed in Table 3.

Table 3  
Occupations of the Silver Hairs During Their Primary Work Careers

Occupation	Percent
Educator	21.8
Blue-collar worker	9.8
Salesperson	8.3
Accountant	5.3
Engineer	5.3

The occupations were further separated into the following employer categories: the government, large firms, small firms, service agencies, and self. With teachers considered as government employees, the government category accounted for 45.9 percent of the Silver Hairs' employment during their primary work careers and 48.6 percent of the Silver Hairs' spouses who had worked outside the home.



The mean number of years of education attained by the Silver Hairs was 15. Table 4 lists education levels.

Table 4  
Distribution of Educational Levels Among Silver Hairs

Diploma or degree	Percent
Elementary diploma	5.9
High school diploma	21.3
Junior college degree	11.0
Bachelor's degree	17.6
Graduate degree	28.7
Other (technical degree)	11.0

Five respondents, or 3.7 percent, had no diploma or degree; however, two of the five noted that diplomas were not awarded in the public schools they attended. The most recent available data for comparison with Florida's general elderly population were reported by the Florida Senate Committee on Health and Rehabilitative Services (1976) (Table 5).

A large portion of the respondents, 63.3 percent, resided in their own homes; 16.5 percent lived in condominiums; 14.4 percent in apartments; and 2.9 percent in mobile homes. Sixty-two percent lived with a spouse, 30.7 percent lived alone, and the remainder lived in shared housing that was evenly distributed among providers: children, parents, other relatives, or friends. The complete data from a



Table 5  
Educational Level of the Silver Hairs and  
Florida's General Elderly Population

Years of school	Silver Hairs percent	Florida's elderly percent
0-8	9.6	43.0
9-12	25.2	39.9
1-4 (college)	35.5	14.6
Graduate school	28.7	2.8

statewide needs assessment are not available, but preliminary data indicated that 73.8 percent of Florida's elderly population owned their homes, 20.3 percent lived in rental housing, and 5.6 percent were provided rent-free housing (CSR Incorporated, 1981). Responses on housing from the Silver Hairs and from Florida's elderly population were categorized differently, but it is apparent that the Silver Hairs were similar to Florida's general elderly population with respect to housing.

Table 6 compares the responses of the Silver Hairs to those of the respondents in a statewide needs assessment survey in which both groups were asked to rate their health.

To assess respondents' identification as "old," the Silver Hairs were asked to categorize themselves into one of five age gradations (Table 7). The results indicate that the Silver Hairs considered themselves to be elderly. A large proportion of the respondents who classified themselves as being in late middle age were between the ages of 60 and 65. The majority of those who classified themselves as young qualified their responses by inserting comments such as "always" or "at heart."



Table 6  
Health Self-Report of the Silver Hairs and  
Florida's General Elderly Population

Response	Silver Hairs percent	Florida's elderly Percent
Better than average	67.2	47.5
Average	28.5	30.6
Worse than average	1.5	21.4

Table 7  
Silver Hairs' Age Self-Categorizations

Category	Percent
Young	5.3
Middle age	11.3
Late middle age	13.5
Young old age	66.2
Old old age	3.8

The Silver Hairs were active in their communities. Because no comparative data base existed for Florida, the nationwide data of Harris and Associated (1975) were relied on for comparisons. Nationally, 17 percent of the aged over 65 years had visited a neighborhood recreational center within the year prior to their response, and 22 percent indicated some form of volunteerism. In contrast, the average



number of monthly activities in which the Silver Hairs engaged was 13, with each Silver Hair averaging 4.6 leadership positions in the organizations he or she attended. The involvement was as follows: 43.3 percent in professional groups, usually occupationally oriented; 86.6 percent in civic groups; 35 percent in religious groups; 17.2 percent in hobby-oriented groups; and 37.6 percent in other groups, most often described as engaging in volunteer activities. Thus, the Silver Hairs reported what appeared to be a high level of activity in their communities; however, the lack of comparative data again necessitates caution in ascribing the Silver Hairs' involvement as being representative of that of the general elderly population.

Mean income comparisons between the Silver Hairs and Florida's general elderly population (presented in Table 2) require further discussion. The income range of the respondents was \$238 to \$8,000 per month. Fifty percent of the Silver Hairs had monthly incomes exceeding \$1,200, while 13.7 percent had incomes of less than \$500. The national mean annual income for persons over the age of 65 in 1975 was estimated to be \$5,671, or \$473 per month (Kraft and Osterbind, 1981). When asked to compare their income with the incomes of others their age, 51.1 percent of the Silver Hairs stated that their income was similar, 37.8 percent that it was better, and 11.1 percent that it was worse. Twenty-four individuals refused to reveal their monthly income and four more could not estimate it. Of these 28 Silver Hairs, it is estimated that at least 20 had incomes above the average monthly Silver Hair mean of \$1,285. This deduction was made possible by an examination of other responses on the questionnaire



from which income could be inferred and by the researcher's ability to identify the respondents through personal interviews. Social Security benefits were a source of income reported by 90.4 percent of the Silver Hairs and pensions were a source of income for 66.2 percent. For additional income, 61 percent reported that they relied on savings and 33 percent on stocks.

Several generalizations can be inferred from the data describing the Silver Haired legislators. They represented a wide range of characteristics, but, more importantly, they seemed to be unrepresentative of the total over-age-60 population of Florida. Compared with Florida's general elderly population, the Silver Hairs had a reverse male-female ratio; more of them were married; there were fewer widows among them; they had higher monthly incomes; and they had attained higher levels of education. In addition, they were healthier and more involved in community activities than other seniors in Florida. Precise socio-demographic statistics to compare the Silver Hairs to other populations under 60 are unavailable, but even allowing for the margin of error resulting from various sources and definitions, one can assume that the Silver Hairs were not a representative, stratified sample of Florida's older population. However, in representative forms of government, the leadership and decision makers are often not representative of the general population and have qualities that are often presumably superior, particularly with respect to incomes, education, and community involvement. For evidence, one need only look at the characteristics of U.S. congressmen or the members of any state legislature (United States Bureau of Census, 1980).



The typical Silver Hair was approximately 70 years of age, white, married or widowed, educated, active in the community, and formerly had had a work career in a high-status occupation. He or she owned a residence which was shared with a spouse or no one, had migrated to Florida from either a northeastern or midwestern state, had an income that was adequate, and had been employed prior to retirement in a profession or highly skilled position.

The Silver Haired respondents were involved in a variety of community organizations and had assumed leadership roles. The majority of the activities were other-directed rather than self-serving hobbies or participation in religious groups. There were a few Silver Hairs who were atypical. The atypical Silver Hair was exemplified by the senator (cited in the preceding chapter) who appeared bewildered in the SHL session. This alternative type differed from the modal type in the following characteristics: He or she was nonwhite, was born in the deep South, had had a low income, was less well educated, and had had a less prestigious occupation. Less than 10 percent of the Silver Hairs studied could be characterized as this alternative type. Emphasis should be placed on other characteristics which describe both types, such as community participation, leadership roles, and other-directed activities. Apparently, through participation in the SHL, the atypical individuals developed personal qualities and social behaviors similar to those usually associated with higher-level income groups.



### Attitudes and Behaviors of the Silver Hairs

This section reports data from the SHL questionnaires and provides a clearer understanding of the Silver Haired legislators and their perception of their role.

When asked who or what groups they represented, over 49.9 percent of the Silver Hairs defined their representative constituency as comprising either all of the elderly or everyone in their districts. Individuals with low incomes, active people, or the middle class were listed as groups the Silver Hairs represented by approximately 10 percent of the respondents. Fourteen additional types were enumerated as being represented in the SHL, but by small percentages. Another 83.3 percent of the Silver Hairs specifically stated that they were unaware of any elderly types who were not represented in the SHL. Likewise, when asked to indicate groups that were overrepresented in the SHL, 70.7 percent identified no such group. Groups that were identified as being overrepresented were so categorized by fewer than four members. Consequently, it can be surmised that members of the SHL considered themselves responsible to a broad-based constituency rather than to specific interest groups. In fact, members of the first Florida SHL made a special effort to caution against any one organization becoming overly influential to the SHL. This was evidenced by their desire for independence from a national organization for the elderly which offered assistance. Furthermore, they prohibited from participation persons employed as service providers to the elderly. Table 8 shows the groups and individuals considered by the Silver Hairs to be the most influential advocates for the elderly in Florida.



Table 8  
Silver Hairs' Ranking of the Most Influential Advocates  
for the Elderly

	Percent
Social service agencies (who provide to the elderly)	69.7
American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)	58.3
Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services	58.3
Governor Bob Graham	8.3

The category social service agencies was a conglomerate of councils, agencies, and local service providers that were identifiable within a particular locale. No one agency in this group was mentioned on the survey more than twice. It should be noted that three of the four entities identified as influential are service providers and are highly visible to the elderly. The fourth group, AARP, has a large national membership but attracts most of its members because of the services it provides, such as magazines, discounts, and information. The data indicated that the Silver Hairs were not an extension of any constituency or organization that might attempt to manipulate the SHL to its own advantage. The Silver Hairs were asked if they had been contacted or lobbied by a special interest group. Over 70 percent reported having been lobbied by one interest group prior to the 1979 and 1980 SHL sessions. This lobby group was unsuccessful with the Silver Hairs,



the opposed bill having passed the SHL each year. This group was successful in the state legislature, however, for the SHL bill was never reported out of the appropriate state committee. At least 13 other special interest groups had contacted Silver Hairs. Only 17.7 percent of the SHL respondents listed no special interest group contacts, and most of these Silver Hairs were recent appointees to the SHL who completed vacated terms. Several registered lobbyists were present during the SHL session.

The Silver Hairs were asked to list leaders or other members who were especially influential within the SHL. Approximately 20 percent of the respondents listed those who occupied the most visible positions—the speaker of the house, the president, and the president pro tem of the senate. One Silver Hair who formerly had occupied one of these positions was identified by 50.9 percent of the sample as an influential member. Apparently, only those in leadership positions were associated with influence, and no other member or group of members was identified as influential. This situation can be considered as both an advantage and a weakness for the SHL concept. While the lack of an emerging leadership can signify the presence of open debate and little power brokering, it can also be interpreted as a hindrance to the SHL's evolution in the institutionalized political structure. A stable, continuing leadership is necessary for the planning of administrative and technical procedures and for maintaining the capabilities to advocate effectively. One task of these procedures would be the development of a communications network. The Silver Hairs listed a variety of local clubs (76.5 percent),



governmental agencies (57 percent), and conversations with cohorts (36.7 percent) as their primary sources of information about the concerns of the elderly. The local clubs were an important contact for the Silver Hairs since 65.2 percent of the Silver Hairs' initial knowledge of the SHL and, subsequently, over 40 percent of the petitions necessary for election eligibility originated within these local clubs.

Ninety percent of the Silver Hairs stated that they became involved in the SHL because of their desire to help others or because of a sense of civic responsibility. When asked to list their individual accomplishments, Silver Hairs most frequently mentioned sponsorship of a bill and the dissemination of information. Eighty-three percent of the Silver Hairs submitted bills and many made presentations about the SHL and advocacy issues to social and civic groups. Almost all the Silver Hairs indicated involvement in the latter activity. A majority of those who had not submitted bills were recent appointees. Almost half of the SHL members who submitted bills sought no assistance in their authorship, while public office holders aided 13.9 percent of those submitting bills.

Nearly half of the respondents, 47 percent, recorded a moderate amount of respect for politicians. Many who responded more favorably qualified their responses by listing "some" or "a few" politicians for whom they had high or very high respect. Regardless of their feelings toward politicians, most Silver Hairs stated a high regard for the political system. Seventy-two percent intended to continue their involvement with the SHL; 5 percent might; 4 percent did not know, and 13 percent thought that it was time for others to participate or that



their contribution was near exhaustion. Only 1 percent were disgusted or frustrated with the SHL concept or organization and planned to terminate their affiliations while 3 percent cited health or other personal reasons for discontinuing participation in the future. When asked if their other activities had increased or decreased since SHL involvement, approximately 53 percent noted an increase in other activities. Of those who stated no increase, a large number cited previous and continuing commitments as prohibitive for the development of further new activities. The Silver Hairs were also asked to state any change in the amount of their political activity resulting from their participation in the SHL. Fifty-eight percent had become involved in other political activities, with most of this group spending their time attending political functions, lobbying, or disseminating information. When asked to estimate the number of hours spent annually on SHL activities other than the actual session, 36 percent reported over 100 hours and another 26 percent would not estimate the hours because they were too numerous.

The Silver Hairs were asked to indicate their current community role and their community role prior to SHL participation according to the following ranking: decision maker, consciousness raiser, contributor, follower and nonparticipant. The results showed a positive increase in the first three categories of 10.6 percent and the consequential reduction in the last two responses from 13 to 5 percent. The mean for the prior community role was 2.95 compared to the mean for the current community role of 2.19. By use of the Kendall Tau B correlation coefficient procedure, individuals' responses to both of the community role questions were compared. The correlation



( $r=.5496$ ,  $p=.0001$ ) indicates that the Silver Hairs who were actively involved in their communities remained active after SHL involvement. It is important to note that for a majority of the respondents the time before SHL involvement was pre-1978 and the time after SHL involvement was post-1980. Thus, these participants are known to have been active participators in their communities over several years' time. Thus, the data indicate that the SHL concept attracted individuals who considered themselves to be active in the community and whose community involvement was continuous.

The participants were asked to evaluate any changes that may have taken place in their perceptions of the issues over the time of their involvement with the SHL. Fifty-seven percent believed their ideas had become more like those of their cohorts, 22.7 percent believed their cohorts' ideas had become more like theirs, 12.8 percent did not know whether there was a change, and only 7.6 percent believed their ideas had become dissimilar. Such homogeneity in ideas may be unique among these Silver Hairs or it may have resulted from SHL participation where fellow elders meet and share views. A related response was to the question eliciting information about changes in community participation, such as in civic, social, and professional clubs. Again, by use of the Kendall Tau B statistic, it was found that those Silver Hairs who were older reported a higher incidence of increase in these activities than did their younger cohorts ( $r=.26$ ,  $p=.002$ ). That is, as the age of Silver Hairs rose, the number of monthly activities increased. A possible interpretation is that individuals who consider community activities important over the life course continue their



investment in these activities. From this perspective, individuals who have dedicated themselves to organizations tend to continue a high level of activity for which they feel rewarded.

When asked to specify new political behaviors resulting from participation in the SHL, almost all Silver Hairs reported an expansion of former behaviors or the creation of new ones. The behaviors mentioned most frequently were lobbying, disseminating information, discussing issues, and similar forms of political participation.

A final correlation of interest was between income and community activities begun since SHL involvement. The data indicated that the Silver Hairs had higher than average incomes and were active community participants. Some elderly persons responded that they had developed new activities since participating in the SHL. Correlations of individual's levels of income with the development of new activities ( $r = -.2137$ ,  $p = .0125$ ) showed that as income levels decreased new activity levels increased. The correlation can be considered weak and the sample of individuals with lower levels of incomes was small; however, the data indicated that the SHL, as an opportunity structure, may have had greater impact, as measured by community involvement, on the lower income elderly who may not have had the resources to have similar opportunities earlier in their lives.

In a final series of questions, the Silver Hairs were asked to rank problems peculiar to the elderly. The respondents rated 14 problems on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 indicating least important. The questions were duplicated from Florida's statewide needs assessment survey. The original intention was to determine if this population of Silver Hairs



viewed problems of the elderly in a way similar to that of the general elderly population of Florida, for whom they were advocating. Unfortunately, the needs assessment data are not available. However, some preliminary findings are available that rank the three major concerns. Thus, the responses of the Silver Hairs were compared with the preliminary data and with a similar ranking from a national survey (Harris and Associates, 1975) (Table 9).

Table 9 demonstrates a similarity between the results of the state survey and the Silver Hairs' survey. The three highest ranked problems from the state survey were health care, transportation, and income. These three problems were ranked 1, 2, and 4 respectively on the Silver Hair Legislature survey. The Silver Hairs ranked housing as their third concern. Allowing for statistical error yields a virtual tie by the Silver Hairs between housing and income problems. Housing was a primary concern of the Silver Hairs during their 1980 session because a large and vocal delegation from Miami voiced considerable concern about the issue. At that time, residential vacancy in the Miami area was reported to be less than 1 percent. The Silver Hairs may also have differed from other elderly Floridians on the housing issue because most Silver Hairs had migrated to the state and housing may have been a greater concern to a migrant population.

There were greater differences between the SHL survey and the national survey. An observation made in the survey by Harris and Associates (1975) was that lower incomes are associated with an individual's lack of health care, fear of crime, fear of loneliness, and a heightened feeling of isolation. These feelings may cause one not



Table 9  
Rankings of the Most Serious Problems of the Elderly, by the Elderly

Problem	Source				National survey <sup>c</sup>	
	SHL survey <sup>a</sup>		Florida survey <sup>b</sup> (three highest ranked)		Percent	Rank
Health care	Mean	Rank				
	3.67	1	✓		21	2
Transportation	3.52	2	✓			
Housing	3.45	3			4	8
Income	3.42	4	✓		15	3
Crime	3.33	5			23	1
Nutrition and food	3.12	6				
Emotional problems	2.94	7				
Protection from disaster	2.93	8				
Legal	2.66	9				
Spare-time activity	2.62	10			6	6
Employment opportunity	2.60	11			5	7
Age discrimination	2.52	12				
Educational opportunity	2.23	13			8	5
Others (loneliness most common response)	1.79	14			12	4

<sup>a</sup> Silver Haired Legislative Questionnaire.

<sup>b</sup> State Needs assessment survey.

<sup>c</sup> Harris and Associates (1975).



to participate in spare-time activities, educational pursuits, and employment opportunities. The incidence of such withdrawals was ranked lower by the Silver Hairs who reported comparatively high incomes and high levels of participation. Furthermore, the Silver Hairs represented a constituency who had migrated to a state that is oriented to leisure activities and that provides greater educational and employment opportunities for the elderly than other states. One interpretation of these data is that the Silver Hairs were influenced more by the concerns of Florida's elderly than by national concerns. It has been noted that states do not always mirror national concerns. Again, the lack of comparative data tempers this conclusion. The point is that the Silver Hairs relied mainly on community contacts for information; thus local concerns were advocated more frequently than national concerns reported by the mass media.

### Discussion

An important question for any advocacy program is, Who do the participants represent? For the SHL, the constituency is the aged of the state of Florida. Therefore, a sample of the state's elderly population would be necessary to fully answer this question. For the most part, the question is rhetorical because one must first ask, How can it be concluded that the Silver Hairs represent the elderly?, or in a broader sense, How can one measure if any elected group can represent a constituency? A comparative data base or reelection to an office might indicate if an officeholder represented a constituency; nevertheless, at present two conclusions can be drawn: (1) Reelection or continued participation of the membership cannot be measured because guidelines



for the operation of the SHL which were established in 1981 prevent reelection. (2) There is insufficient data in Florida for adequate comparisons between the Silver Hairs and the elderly of the state.

The descriptive data from the Silver Hairs point to a considerable amount of similarity among the SHL members with regard to certain characteristics. The findings indicated a strong relationship between income, occupation, and education and the incidence of community ties and activities. The Silver Hairs refrained from identifying any interest group they represented; however, they relied heavily on their community ties and clubs for support ranging from the initial knowledge of the SHL to the petition signatures, votes, and information. It should be noted that the organizations alluded to represented a wide range of goals and individuals. Given our democratic processes, we find that ties to the community are a necessary ingredient for political participation and effectiveness. It would be difficult to imagine isolated citizens commanding any substantial following.

The Silver Hairs' responses indicated an increasing homogeneity among the membership in their ideas. From interviews and discussions, it was found that the Silver Hairs credited the opportunity to consult with others throughout the state as the primary factor in their realization that all elderly persons have similar needs.

Several challenges to the research cited in the review of the literature (Chapter II) are evidenced by the data presented in this chapter: (1) The Silver Hairs identified themselves both with the aged and as being aged. (2) Life-long political identities were channeled into new forms of political activities. The Silver Hairs



seemed to be homogeneous on issues and social characteristics although they were elected and therefore represented a heterogeneous population. (3) Varieties and differences of interests were exchanged to facilitate solutions to situations. (4) The Silver Hairs resided in all areas of the state and in a wide range of residence types. An age-segregated lifestyle was a precondition set by some researchers for increased political participation.

An important individual characteristic discussed was the number of leadership positions and roles held in the community. The experiences gained in these community roles—for example, organization, communication, problem solving, and arbitration—are important assets for the Silver Hairs. The skill of negotiation is important in political advocacy, and individuals who are labeled as "doers" are beneficial to the success of the SHL. Furthermore, when the time comes to lobby the state legislators, these community groups serve as accessible, dependable resources.

The number of contacts made by lobbyists to the Silver Hairs was not surprising. The high incidence of lobbying Silver Hairs was an acknowledgment of the importance attributed to the SHL potential.

Other data presented in Chapter VII raise questions about the use of public funds for the SHL. One argument favoring public funding is to increase the participation by all segments of the elderly population. In the previous section it was mentioned that Silver Hairs who showed the greatest increase in group and community activities were the participants with the least income. Elderly individuals with higher incomes can more easily participate in community ventures, while



the public subsidy of the SHL permits the lower income aged who wish to participate the means to become involved. This in turn leads to other forms of involvement, both in new nonpolitical activities and in new political activities. Essentially, the SHL, as described here, modifies the effect of income on participation.

In general, this research demonstrates that the SHL concept attracts individuals who have been life-long participators or who are similar to those elderly labeled as "activity oriented" in gerontological research. These data lend support to the continuity of activities throughout the life cycle.

Apparently, the communities of these elderly are satisfied with the Silver Hairs' representation, or at least they are silent protestors. Hess and Kerschner (1978) described advocacy as an energetic concept and a vigorous process. From this viewpoint, the type of individuals described in the experiential learning model is an expected social type.



CHAPTER VII  
DATA FROM SURVEYS OF FLORIDA STATE LEGISLATORS AND THE 50 STATES

State Legislators

To assess the impact of the Silver Haired Legislature concept on the legislative process, a mail survey and follow-up interviews with some of the 1980 state legislators were conducted (Appendix D). The response rate to the mail survey was 63.3 percent, 21 senators and 79 members of the house of representatives. Ninety-eight percent of the respondents reported that they were either extensively or moderately familiar with the SHL. Seventy-one percent believed the SHL to be very or moderately effective, whereas 7 percent considered it to be a hindrance to the legislative process. Seventy-one percent favored continuance of the SHL; their most commonly stated reasons were the SHL's initiation of ideas beneficial to the elderly and its provision of an effective forum for their concerns. Of the 26 percent who did not favor continuance of the SHL, the cost factor was the primary concern of over 65 percent.

When asked if public funds should be utilized for the SHL, 56 percent responded negatively. Almost half of this latter group did not favor public support for the SHL because they considered it a special interest or lobby group. Their concern was the inequity of singling out for public support one such group.



Eighty percent of the state legislators who responded had supported the SHL in a variety of ways, e.g., by giving advice, information, or funds. Sixty-four percent believed that the SHL gave the elderly an advantageous position in the legislative process. The advantages described were special attention, utilization of the legislative staff, growing visibility without challenge, and an open conduit to the legislators. Twenty percent of those who did not think advantages to the elderly were increased qualified their responses by adding that any possible advantages created by the SHL were no greater than those for any other lobby group. This qualification can be interpreted to mean that the SHL has created an advantageous position for the elderly's concerns in comparison to what existed prior to its inception. Combining the "yes" and qualified responses would increase to over 70 percent those legislators who judged the SHL concept as favorable to the elderly.

Clearly these responses represent measures of the SHL's successes. More importantly, they indicate that the SHL is receiving special attention in the legislative process (as discussed in Chapter III). The data support the perception that the SHL is developing as a separate advocacy group compared to other more traditional forms of advocacy. A number of legislators and legislative aides who were interviewed contended that a bill passed in the SHL is almost automatically considered by the appropriate state legislative committee, the assumption being that if the Silver Hairs pass a bill, then it should at least be considered by the state legislature. These types of responses indicate that the SHL concept is becoming institutionalized



in the legislative processes of the state of Florida. In other words, the SHL plays a formal role by consolidating issues that affect the elderly, and is considered to be a separate entity from other lobby or interest groups who have minimal levels of confidence that their concerns will reach the committee stage of the legislative process. In addition, the Silver Hairs, especially the SHL leadership, have easy accessibility to state legislators' offices and staffs. It is interesting that in a SHL leadership meeting, composed of the SHL committee chairpersons and officers who met in December, 1980, one Silver Hair suggested that the president and speaker of the SHL register as lobbyists. This Silver Hair also stated that other members of the Silver Haired leadership should register as lobbyists since that is what they considered themselves to be. This suggestion was passed as a motion, and the leadership registered as lobbyists. One may conclude that the Silver Hairs view themselves as evolving into bona fide lobbyists.

The results of the survey of legislators are important because the legislators must have had a high regard for the SHL concept and for the Silver Hairs' performance before they committed themselves to sponsor SHL bills. It is the legislature, more than any other government group, whose support is necessary for the SHL concept. The state legislators consider the SHL as a means to educate and train the elderly for advocacy and also as a mechanism that produces lobbyists. A few legislators expressed irritation with Silver Hairs who exceeded their role and portrayed themselves as elected officials of the state, i.e., state senators and representatives. Several state legislators added that the assistance of the SHL mechanism is valuable for



communication to the larger elderly constituency. Essentially, they noted that Silver Hairs provide a filtering process for local grievances and complaints which reduces pressures on state officials and may prevent potential conflicts.

The Joint Legislative Management Committee's "History of Legislation" (1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980) was used as a guide and as a count of the bills passed by the Florida State Legislature which primarily affected the elderly. State legislative staff members indexed a bill "aged" if its content was aged related. Table 10 lists the results.

Table 10  
Bills Passed into Law Which Affected the Aged

Session year	Number of bills
1976	4
1977	5
1978	6
1979	11
1980	16

While the circumstances and goals of each legislative session cannot be equated with the others, it is assumed that the years 1976 to 1980 are comparable because the political climate of the state was relatively stable. The same political party maintained its majority in



the legislature and controlled the executive branch. It is interesting to note that the first session of the state legislature to be impacted by the SHL was in 1979, and the second in 1980. There was a significant increase in the number of bills concerning the elderly passed during the sessions impacted by the SHL. All of this increase cannot be attributed to the SHL, but it seems reasonable to infer that most of the increase resulted from the efforts of the SHL. These data are among the most persuasive obtained in this study, indicating that the SHL presents the concerns of the aged and is successful as their advocacy group.

#### Diffusion of the Silver Haired Legislature Idea

A brief questionnaire was sent to the 50 state offices responsible for programs for the aged to assess the diffusion of the Silver Haired Legislature concept (Appendix D). Responses were secured from all the states, and each state respondent expressed knowledge of the concept. Twenty-seven states had no current plans to conduct a SHL. Eight states—Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Mississippi, New York, Ohio, South Dakota, and Utah—had initiated preliminary investigations of the concept. Alabama was proceeding with plans, while Louisiana had a plan approved and was in the process of seeking funds to sponsor a SHL. Neither of the latter two states could offer a firm date or year for the implementation of their plans.

By the end of 1980, 13 states had conducted SHLs although all had not used the name SHL. For example, Indiana called its SHL prototype the "Older Hoosiers Assembly," and many states had adopted



different procedures to reflect their own sociopolitical environment. Table 11 lists states that have SHLs and the initiating year.

Table 11  
States with Silver Haired Legislatures

State	Year
Missouri	1973
Indiana	1977
Florida	1978
Iowa	1978
Arkansas	1978
Georgia	1980
Montana	1980
Massachusetts	1980
Nebraska	1980
North Dakota	1980
New Hampshire	1981
California	1981
West Virginia	1981

The states with an interest in the SHL provided the names and addresses of persons to contact for further information. This indicated that someone had been assigned the responsibility for coordinating SHL developments. With eight states adopting the SHL concept in the past two



years and 10 others conducting preliminary investigations of the concept, a national pattern is developing for the elderly to advocate their own interests. Some of the members of the current SHL leadership in Florida have announced at public meetings around the state their intention to organize a national association of Silver Haired Legislatures. At least one noted gerontologist has written Washington officials to suggest that a national SHL-type format be utilized for the 1991 White House Conference on Aging.

The successes of the SHL in Missouri and Florida have become common knowledge to many state planners. The SHL concept is spreading, and it is acknowledged by officials at the state and national level that the elderly can and should have the opportunity to advocate for themselves. Several states have developed and sponsored alternative advocacy models, but at the present time, the SHL is the most common form of self-advocacy by the elderly. The number of states that have either initiated or are initiating the concept, and the fact that other states currently are investigating SHLs, shows that this form of advocacy by the elderly is diffusing throughout the society.

#### Summary

Data received from questionnaires to state legislators in Florida and the 50 state offices on aging depict the SHL concept as a viable program of advocacy for the elderly. The data lead to the conclusion that decision makers in the state of Florida have recognized the SHL concept to be a political factor that enhances the passage of legislation affecting the elderly. That other states have determined



the SHL to be a program deserving their attention aids in the SHL concept's diffusion. A major concern raised by the state legislators is the funding of Silver Haired Legislatures. Thus, funding of a SHL is a major problem to those individuals amenable to the concept.



CHAPTER VIII  
DISCUSSION OF THE HYPOTHESES, OBJECTIVES, AND  
THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING MODEL

Discussion of Hypotheses

This section discusses the findings of the study that are relevant to the general hypotheses offered in Chapter III.

H<sub>1</sub>—The Silver Haired Legislature as an advocacy process in Florida does not increase the level of self-advocacy, political participation, and commitment of its participants. The data demonstrated that the Silver Hairs were active in their communities prior to SHL membership. The Silver Hairs averaged 4.6 positions of leadership in their communities. These positions demonstrated involvement in a number of community organizations, such as occupational/professional, civic, and lobby groups.

From comments made on the questionnaires and in the interviews with the Silver Hairs, it was concluded that the Silver Hairs had been participators over their entire life span. The SHL concept expanded the possibilities for these older Floridians to exercise a more direct influence upon politics and upon advocacy for the elderly at the state level. The Silver Hairs had refocused their local organizational ties from a wide range of social, civic, and other community efforts to more specific political activities. The data show that Silver Hairs reported a variety of new or expanded behaviors. These included



presentations to groups and organizations, lobby planning, increased political activity, participation in local caucuses, and an entire change in community roles as measured by their responses to the ranking of their community roles. This resulted in a mean decrease from 2.95 for their roles prior to SHL involvement to 2.19 for their roles after SHL involvement, based on a 4-point range. A score of 1 indicated the most involvement and a score of 4 indicated the least involvement. This information, together with the reported annual 100 hours and more devoted to SHL affairs by over 60 percent of the Silver Hairs, leads to the conclusion that SHL membership increased self-advocacy and political participation.

Commitment to the SHL is a more nebulous issue and is difficult to measure precisely. However, the number of hours and willingness to serve the additional term, coupled with future plans for political efforts indicated by the Silver Hairs, support the high level of commitment. To quote a Silver Hair, "I am not sure if my individual involvement has increased the success of the SHL, but I certainly feel as though it has, and this encourages me further." From another perspective, the responses by state legislators who cited increased contacts by Silver Hairs concerning legislative matters offer additional support for the rejection of this hypothesis. Therefore,  $H_1$  is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis, that the Silver Haired Legislature as an advocacy process in Florida increases the level of self-advocacy, political participation, and commitment of its participants.

$H_2$ —The Silver Haired Legislature is not an opportunity structure that provides an advocacy mechanism which enables various segments of



the elderly population to offer proposals that expedite consideration by state legislators.

By definition, the SHL is an opportunity structure because it is a pattern of relationships which expands the choices of forms that advocacy can have. As an advocacy process, the SHL assembles representatives from a diverse group of aged persons in the state. The Silver Hairs have had considerable success; almost all of their priority bills have been introduced into the state legislature and approximately two-thirds of these bills have been accepted either as written or in part. Considering the comparatively short time frame in which this case study was completed, together with its focus on the 1980 SHL and only one legislative session, the main question is, Compared to what are the SHL bills expeditious? This latter issue is considered to be moot. The environment of political decision making does not permit adequate comparison because factors which influence the decision-making process cannot be held constant. However, Silver Hairs propose their legislation in the SHL session conducted in July, and, by the end of the calendar year, the bills are presented in the state legislature. Interviews with several state legislators and two lobbyists resulted in the consensus that it was rare for an advocacy group to prioritize their issues in July and have them presented consistently to a state legislative committee by the end of the year. This sequence over a period of a few months is an indicator of political expediency when the entire political process is considered. It is concluded, therefore, that the SHL is a vehicle which can shorten the legislative process. Most of the time saved is in the initial stages of the legislative process which begins



with citizen concerns and ends with the introduction of a bill in the legislature. It should be noted that 64 percent of the state legislators described the SHL as an open conduit to legislators, increased visibility, legislative staffs, and/or gaining other special privileges. Another important finding is the responses of 63 percent of the state legislators, who portrayed the SHL as a forum which identifies the elderly's concerns. In an interview, a former state legislator who held a leadership position used the term "mobilizing factor" to describe the SHL as the rationale for increased legislation for the elderly in Florida because "the SHL is a structure which demands the attention of state legislators."

Therefore,  $H_2$  is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis, that the Silver Haired Legislature is an opportunity structure that provides an advocacy mechanism which enables the elderly population to offer proposals that expedite consideration by state legislators.

$H_3$ —The Silver Haired Legislature is not an effective organization to compete for limited resources at the state level.

One of the state goals of the SHL leadership is the passage by the legislature of SHL-prioritized bills or at least the passage of their intent into law by the state legislature. These bills must compete in the political process with the concerns offered by numerous and frequently better-financed individuals, groups, organizations, and lobbies. In effect, the SHL bills compete for the limited resources of the state legislature. Since the state legislative session which considered the 1980 SHL bills is viewed as a separate case, attention is focused first on the successes of the 1978 and 1979 SHLs. Sixteen



of the 29 SHL legislative proposals were incorporated into statutes of the state of Florida. According to the SHL report given by its speaker of the house for 1978-1979, the 16 issues included the following (Crofut, 1980):

1. Expanded health and dental benefits to medicaid-eligible persons of all ages
2. Establishment of a hospital cost-containment commission
3. Establishment of a transportation coordinating council for all of the state's disadvantaged
4. Expanded funding for community care for the elderly
5. Waiver of fees and academic prerequisites for older Floridians to attend state community colleges and universities on a space-available basis
6. Regulation of adult congregate living facilities
7. Rights of mobile home owners to assemble peaceably
8. Legislative review of children in foster care
9. Increased homestead exemptions
10. Increased benefits for state retirees
11. Cost-of-living adjustment for state retirees
12. Regulation of condominium conversion
13. Regulation of health insurance (disclosure and medigap insurance)
14. Establishment of a method of inventory of the state's disabled citizens who would require assistance in emergency evacuation
15. Property tax relief



16. Electric utility rate relief and energy-related assistance for older Floridians.

Five additional issues of the SHL were dealt with administratively and their resolution was successful:

1. The creation of a house subcommittee on aging by the speaker of the house
2. A commitment from the governor to appoint more senior citizens on public policy boards, councils, and commissions
3. The governor's directive to the secretary of HRS to increase Title XX funding to elderly persons
4. The governor's high priority on the creation of a state plan to reduce crimes against the elderly
5. The governor and legislature's agreement to support the 1981 SHL.

Thus the 16 issues and 5 administrative successes account for approximately 64 percent of the legislative priorities of the 1978 and 1979 SHLs.

Results of the 1980 SHL were obtained from reports made to the 1981 SHL by the speaker of the house and the senate president of the 1980 SHL (Jansen, 1981; Lowe, 1981). Twelve SHL priority bills were enumerated in Chapter V, and to avoid redundancy they are referred to here by number with a descriptive title and a brief statement about their legislative conclusion:

1. Bill #4, Relief from duplication of insurance policies.  
Legislation was enacted mandating insurance carriers to identify and explain duplicating coverages.



2. Bill #6, Mobile home parks rent.

The bill did not pass committee.

3. Bill #14, Limit/Lower senior citizens' utility rates.

The bill did not pass committee but several legislators expressed concern about the issue. These concerns were transmitted to utility firms who were to report their suggestions.

4. Bill #18, Habitual felony offenders.

The bill was discussed but not reported out of committee. The legislative committee's discussion focused on the SHL assumption that more severe penalties are necessary for habitual offenders. The issue is to be discussed again under the auspices of the governor's call for increased statewide consideration on the topic of crime.

5. Bill #26, Geriatric education.

The Board of Regents was directed to make recommendations for the expansion of facilities and recruitment of staff for geriatric education.

6. Bill #41, Denturity.

No legislative action was taken. This bill was similar to bills offered by the 1978 and the 1979 SHL which were never reported out of committee. Dentists and dental lab lobbyists successfully argued that the recent increased competition and concomitant price reduction made this bill unnecessary. Interestingly, these changes were instituted after the SHL bill was presented, and there is some speculation by



legislators and lobbyists interviewed that the SHL bill contributed to these changes. However, this view is difficult to prove. Suffice it to say, this bill exemplifies changes probably initiated by the SHL proposal without the SHL bill ever being reported out of committee.

7. Bill #46, Halfway housing for the elderly.

This bill was not voted out of committee because the committee was aware of a federal report, dated March, 1981, titled "Older Americans Act Programs," published by the Department of Health and Human Services, which directed the attention of Congress to the issue. Thus, the SHL bill was forwarded to the appropriate congressional committee. The committee was sympathetic to the issue but decided to delay action until it reviewed the federal response. Therefore, this action is considered sufficient for tabulation as a SHL success.

8. Bill #48, Nursing Homes.

The federal government became involved with third-party monies which would have negated Florida legislation. Executive action ensures that Florida will cooperate with guidelines which will fulfill the intent of the SHL.

9. Bill #53, Consolidation of health care services.

Satisfactory legislative action. The philosophy of the SHL bill was adopted and community (county) health providers are mandated toward consolidation.

10. Bill #64, County geriatric clinics.

Bill passed which included SHL's intent. County health agencies were directed to provide geriatric facilities and care.



11. Bill #68, Crimes against the elderly and handicapped.  
The governor included this issue in his complete crime package. The results are similar to those stated for Bill #18 above.

12. Mandatory retirement.

Bill similar to SHL bill passed. Retirement limitations due to age have been removed legislatively.

It can be concluded that four SHL bills were unsuccessful (bills numbered 6, 14, 41, and 68). The remaining eight bills received either partial or full implementation for a success rate of approximately two-thirds. The legislative process is ongoing. It is naive to imply that SHL legislative success is attained only by the state legislature's passing all SHL bills in their entirety. Hence, if the major intent of a bill is implemented at any level of government, the SHL action can be considered as successful.

The 1980 SHL also submitted five memorials which were sent to the appropriate federal-level agency. The enumeration and results of these memorials are as follows:

1. Bill #8, Energy/billboard lighting.

No action taken to date.

2. Bill #25, Land for a national veterans cemetery.

Accomplished; plans for construction of the cemetery in Florida are being made.

3. Bill #62, Medicare.

No action taken, but Congress is currently considering budget cuts which would affect medicare.



4. Bill #64, Maintain Social Security benefits.

Maintenance of Social Security benefits is not being discussed, but administrative sources contend that the social security system will be continued.

5. Bill #100, Excessive earnings penalty.

Accomplished; this restriction is to be altered.

Of the five memorials, three can be considered as accepted (bills numbered 25, 63, and 100) for a success rate of 60 percent.

Lawmaking can be viewed as a continuous process, and one can assume that the foundations for several bills have been laid with the possibility of favorable action in future sessions.

In view of the impending funding cuts from the national government and/or possible block funding, where the state receives an allocation from the federal government to distribute according to state needs, a uniform advocacy program for the elderly would increase the likelihood of their programs being funded. Rather than having several organizations for the elderly each competing for its own legislative priorities, the SHL concept creates a forum for the expression of all the elderly's needs and ideas. Individuals who advocate for the aged at the national level are increasingly suggesting that state-level groups coalesce. As one national informant (Kerschner, 1981: ) stated, "The different advocacy groups need only go to school together, not marry." In this kind of political environment, the SHL concept would become even more attractive to the elderly's interest groups. Therefore,  $H_3$  is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis, that the Silver Haired Legislature is an effective organization to compete for limited resources at the state level.



H<sub>4</sub>—The elderly in Florida are not recognized by elected decision makers as having a centralized organization to present realistic proposals.

Two major political entities in the state of Florida can be identified as recognizing the SHL as representative of the elderly: (1) During the opening session of the 1980 SHL, the governor, as chief executive, publicly acclaimed the SHL as the representative of the elderly and praised its practicality (Graham, 1980). Also, the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services—more specifically the Division of Aging and Adult Services—as part of the executive branch, has consistently written the SHL program into its State Plans (1978, 1979, 1980, 1981) because the department believes that the SHL is representing the elderly with realistic proposals. (2) The members of the state legislature by their responses to the survey and support of the SHL concept in the legislative process have shown that they consider SHL proposals to be realistic, and that they identify the SHL's constituency as the elderly. It should be noted that some state legislators surveyed viewed some of SHL's proposals as unrealistic.

In addition, because the Silver Hairs are elected, they consider their proposals as realistic and representative of the elderly. Interviews with leaders, informants, and the aged in the state as well as the state coordinator of the SHL did not produce any evidence to suggest that the elderly, in any convincing numbers, have criticized or complained about the representation or proposals of the SHL. The successes of the SHL are sufficient evidence for the SHL



to be considered a centralized organization in addition to being recognized by Florida's legislature and the executive branch. Therefore,  $H_4$  is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis, that the elderly in Florida have a centralized organization, the SHL, to present realistic proposals which are recognized by the decision makers in the state.

$H_5$ —The Silver Haired Legislature does not create an advantageous position for the concerns of the elderly in the legislative process compared to aged-related advocacy prior to 1978.

According to information from the state legislators, the SHL enhances the position of the elderly in the political process. The state legislators were asked: "Do you think that the Silver Haired Legislature gives the elderly an advantageous position in the legislative process?" The majority responded in the affirmative with over half of the responses containing descriptive terms, such as conduit, forum, lobby, unique vehicle, successful mechanism, organizes the elderly, informative, and pressure group to describe the SHL. Thirty-five percent responded in the negative with a minority qualifying their answers by evaluating the SHL as an equalizing agent compared to other lobby groups. Others argued that the elderly already had an advantageous position. Still another smaller number responded that an increase of political input never places any group in an advantageous position because participation should emanate from a sense of responsibility rather than political gain. These responses, coupled with the increase of bills affecting the elderly after the creation of the SHL, challenge the hypothesis.



The inherent objective of the SHL concept is to enhance the elderly's position in the legislative process. In this regard, the executive branch of Florida government judges the SHL as successful and continues its support (Graham, 1980; State Plan, 1980). The record of the SHL priority bills acted upon favorably is yet another indication of an advantageous position. Therefore,  $H_5$  is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis, that the Silver Haired Legislature creates an advantageous position for the concerns of the elderly in the legislative process.

$H_6$ —The elderly in Florida cannot advocate their own interests with a centralized organization.

Data from the observation period established a basis for criticism of the SHL structure and procedures. These data were discussed fully in Chapter V and describe the SHL as a centralized organization. The SHL is a developing concept, and the changes that have been associated with each new session indicate that the concept will continue to evolve. The Silver Hairs were observed to have the ability to debate their ideas in a relatively new environment with eloquence, knowledge, and an appreciation of their limitations. The SHL members were capable; as one enthusiastic participant noted, "It [the SHL] attempts to do in four days what the state legislature does in four months." The limitations of the SHL, e.g., preparatory orientations, time constraints, unfamiliar surroundings, untried leadership, and lack of experience, create a complicated organizational structure, but one that offers a centralized forum for the elderly.



Responses from most of the Silver Hairs indicated that their pre-filed bills were a result of their own efforts with minimal assistance. Therefore,  $H_6$  is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis, that the elderly in Florida can advocate their own interests within a centralized organization.

$H_7$ —The Silver Haired Legislature is not viewed as a potentially successful advocacy forum for the elderly throughout the United States.

Data presented earlier in this chapter support the rejection of this hypothesis. By the end of 1981, 13 states had conducted SHLs, with 10 other states pursuing the concept. Almost all of the diffusion of the SHL concept occurred within the three-year period 1978-1980. There exists the trend in the United States to develop strategies in which the elderly can serve as their own advocates, and the SHL concept is the most common form of advocacy reported by the state offices on aging. Therefore,  $H_7$  is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis, that the Silver Haired Legislature is viewed as a potentially successful advocacy forum for the elderly throughout the United States.

### Discussion of Objectives

Just as the general hypotheses were utilized in the preceding section to organize and interpret the data, this section utilizes the objectives outlined in Chapter III for a discussion of the data and the SHL concept. Eleven objectives were listed for this research. Several of these objectives were formalized into hypotheses and were previously discussed. The remaining objectives are now discussed.

The SHL is an innovative organization because it relates to the advocacy of the elderly. The reader is reminded that the original idea



for a SHL was generated by a mock legislature for young adults in Missouri. Actually, the idea of a mock legislative assembly is not new in the United States. The practice of conducting mock legislative assemblies has often been used in classrooms. In 1935, the Department of Illinois of the American Legion (Americanism Manual, 1979) sponsored a statewide program, named Boys State, to create an event that allowed boys to have a practical experience of government and political decision making. Boys States are held in every state, and they simulate a legislature with mock political parties and issues. The concept has been expanded to include a similar event for girls (Girls State). In 1967, the Jaycees of Missouri sponsored a mock legislative session for men under the age of 35. The purpose was educational, and the men presented and debated proposals which they hoped one day would become state law. After the proposals passed the mock legislature, they were forwarded to the state legislature. As described in Chapter V, a state senator from Missouri applied this concept to the elderly. Thus, the mock legislature idea was not innovative; however, when it was made available to the elderly, it generated new dimensions which were innovative.

The SHL began as an education and training program in Florida. However, some Silver Hairs wished to apply their knowledge in practical government affairs and, consequently, expanded the mechanism to include a lobbying effort. Some disagreed with the inclusion of the lobbying dimensions and others denied that the lobbying activities existed. This research substantiates the SHL's lobbying role.



In December, 1980, preparations began for the 1981 SHL, and the director of the Office on Aging and Adult Services introduced a major change. Silver Hairs were to serve a two-year term only. Furthermore, this new regulation was to be applied retroactively. This decision has several ramifications. The primary basis for the decision was the return of the SHL to its original intent, as funded by Title III: to provide education and training. If the SHL is to educate and train the elderly, it was determined by these state officials that more than one term was unnecessary. On the other hand, this action created a void in experience, leadership, and continuity. A number of 1980 Silver Hairs indicated that they had no intention of seeking office again. A consequence of this void is less control of the SHL by the Silver Hairs and more reliance on the state coordinator's office. Silver Hairs will simply not be involved with the program long enough to develop long-term goals and organizational strategies. These types of issues are the result of adopting a basic system and making it innovative and adaptive. Regardless of the problems associated with the SHL, it is well organized for its purposes. The SHL concept is resilient and allows for adjustments in procedures to meet goals.

An often cited barrier to advocacy by the elderly is age heterogeneity. As in most gerontological research, the findings of this research indicate that age is not a crucial, explanatory variable (Maddox and Wiley, 1976). It is not the age of a person which explains political behavior. The related characteristic of age heterogeneity by the SHL participants with the elderly population of the state is similarly insignificant. The age range of the Silver Hairs was 36



years. Either the individual characteristics of the participants or the SHL structure itself fostered homogeneity on the issues, or there was a high degree of agreement about the issues prior to election to the SHL. At least age heterogeneity was not a barrier for this advocacy group, and interviews with Silver Hairs did not reveal their age differences compared with the elderly in their districts as a barrier. The SHL is an issues-oriented program and the age differential is beneficial when discussing alternatives. The different cohorts could offer a variety of perspectives. The SHL structure provides a setting for debate and deliberations which leads to a consensus on the issues.

Responses on the SHL questionnaires indicated that the Silver Hairs returned to their communities and expanded their roles; the data previously discussed characterized the Silver Hairs as highly involved in community organizations; and the Silver Hairs reported their service in the SHL caused groups in their home communities to perceive them as having acquired expertise beneficial to group activity. Many Silver Hairs became intermediators with government, and this position led state legislators to utilize some Silver Hairs to establish a flow of communication. It is not claimed that a relationship to a constituency of older persons was a dominant factor in the organizational life of a community representative. But some relationship to a constituency was there as evidenced by a continuing connection between those who were ostensibly being represented and those who were doing the representing.

Enumerating the conditions which influenced the SHL to make realistic demands on the political system is little more than conjecture. A major reason is the selection process of the Silver Hairs.



No statistics of registered voters by age in Florida are available; however, the 1978 gubernatorial election may serve as a baseline—1.5 million votes cast. If one assumes that the percentage of registered voters who participated in the election was similar to that of the aged in the population, then 20 percent of the 1978 electorate were over the age of 60. A personal estimate of the total numbers of persons over 60 who voted is 300,000. The SHL elections of 1979 attracted over 95,000 elderly voters, or in excess of 30 percent of the 1978 estimated gubernatorial turnout of citizens over age 60. This 30 percent figure would be a relatively low one for a major election, average for a special election, and high for an unofficial election. Considering that the SHL elections had fewer polling places than official elections and the voting time was approximately one-half that of a regular election, the SHL voter turnout could be considered exceptional. This researcher did not find much challenge to the legitimacy of those who were selected or elected. As one interviewee stated, "The election process . . . [allows] those with the greatest interest the greatest opportunity to influence who gets elected."

The aged vote for SHL candidates whose leadership abilities are known to them through organizational activities in local groups. These local groups increase the propensity of the individual to be a participant because they provide an opportunity for training, through participation within an organization, that can be transferred to the political realm. Another important condition is that the coordination of the SHL is part of the executive branch of government. This connection generates considerable consulting services and assistance



from various levels of the government. Therefore, the SHL leadership is privy to more knowledge than those outside the system. A final condition to be offered is the perceived responsibility by the Silver Hairs to be purposeful, pragmatic, and realistic. It is common knowledge that continuance of the SHL depends on realistic demands, and this condition tempers the political requests made by the Silver Hairs.

Each of these conditions is affected by the primary purpose of the SHL, which is education and training in the legislative process. Although the range of responses varied, the Silver Hairs indicated gains in first-hand experiences in the legislative process. They learned the necessities of negotiating and mobilizing resources to influence lawmaking. They also developed interpersonal skills and knowledge resources to advocate in the legislative process. Several of the Silver Hairs interviewed rejected the notion of acquiring new skills but emphasized the sharpening of existing talents and the experience of learning and demystifying the system by establishing political contacts.

Because of the strong commitments for continuing the SHL, it is likely to become institutionalized into Florida's political arena. However, the future of the SHL and its direction are dependent upon the funding process. If the state legislature and the governor continue to support the SHL, then they will obviously want to ensure control over the program. As mentioned earlier, only about 20 percent of the 1980 Silver Hairs will be permitted to serve in the 1981 SHL. These 20 percent are Silver Hairs who were appointed to the SHL to fill vacancies and were never elected to their own 2-year term, thus being exempted from the one 2-year-term rule. This criterion was



mandated by the state because at the last leadership meeting in 1980, the SHL leaders recommended the opposite, i.e., no limit to the number of terms served by a Silver Hair. All former Silver Hairs have been invited to function in the role of SHL emeritus, which is as yet undefined. All of these decisions affect the output and deliberations of the SHL but at the same time increase the likelihood of institutionalizing the concept in the state.

On the other hand, if independent funding were obtained (over \$130,000 would be necessary), the SHL would have an independent financial base and state control would be reduced or eliminated. However, state assistance would probably be cut. Such independence would also change the special status of the SHL and force it to compete with other lobby groups that have greater resources than the SHL could hope to garner.

The final objective is to determine for whom the SHL advocates—the general population, only the elderly, or certain segments of the elderly. Analysis of the 1980 priority bills within these categories revealed that of the 12 bills, 6 would affect the general population: relief from duplication of increased policies, a habitual offender policy, mobile home park rental limitations, establishing the practice of denturity, consolidation of health care services, and mandating retirement based on capabilities. Six other bills could have consequences for the elderly in a more specific way: a limit on senior citizens' utility rates, a geriatric education program, a halfway house program for the elderly, the creation of county geriatric clinics, medicaid



rates for nursing homes, and mandatory sentences for certain crimes committed against the elderly.

Several bills could be placed in either category: for instance, the mandatory retirement bill and the geriatric education bill. A case can also be made that all bills might affect the elderly either directly or indirectly. However, the elderly would be the group most affected by the legislation. One conclusion is that the SHL does not advocate for any particular segments or groups of elderly. By dichotomizing the legislation passed by the 1980 SHL as age specific or oriented to the entire population, this researcher found that the SHL was primarily concerned with advocating for the general welfare of the entire elderly population. Furthermore, the SHL does not hesitate to propose broader-based legislation that affects the entire population if such legislation is judged to be the logical means to benefit the elderly.

#### Experiential Learning Model

An index using the social characteristics of income, education, and occupation was constructed. Other traits such as type of residence and type of employer were deemed inappropriate because they did not alter the distribution of individuals but were originally included because they are variables thought to indicate status.

The responses for education, income, and occupation were highly skewed. Thus, each category was defined as follows:

High education— At least a high school diploma with some additional training



High income—income reported as \$650 per month or higher (unless recoded due to an inconsistency; see below) and respondent's self-report that the income was better or the same as that of others in the same age group.

High occupation—life-long career as educator, executive, medical professional, businessman, lawyer, accountant, engineer, dentist, chemist, or other similar occupation.

Each of the Silver Hairs received a score of 1 for each category if his or her responses were consistent with the above definitions and a score of 0 if not. Thus, a possible additive score of 3 could be attained. Pertinent responses of each Silver Hair were reviewed to determine if the definitions yielded any pattern that was considered inconsistent among the categories. Some inconsistent scores were found for individuals who were highly educated and employed as teachers during a period of low pay for the teaching profession. Other inconsistent scores were obtained for women who were highly educated and with short careers in prestigious occupations but who later opted for the homemaker role and became widowed. The latter group scored 0 on the income factor, and it was assumed that their incomes were low due to inadequate retirement preparation and/or length of survival. These two groups accounted for 10 individuals, 7 in the former group and 3 in the latter group. Rather than redefine the high income category, income was recoded as high for these two groups if it exceeded \$550. The selection of the \$550 figure can be supported from another perspective.



Kraft and Osterbind (1981), in their statistical abstract of Florida's older population, reported that 27.7 percent of the persons over the age of 65 in the mid-1970s had annual incomes of over \$6,000.

Therefore, education, occupation, and income have four outcomes in an index: 0, 1, 2, or 3. Table 12 reports the distribution.

Table 12  
Distribution of Silver Hairs by Status

Status rank	Number	Percent
0 - none	4	3.17
1 - low	6	4.76
2 - medium	25	19.84
3 - high	<u>91</u>	<u>72.22</u>
Totals	126	100.00
Missing data	13	(not included)

The data suggest that the Silver Hairs had higher status scores than the elderly population which they represented. Specific data for comparisons are not yet available for inclusion in the analysis. However, other sources (Atchley, 1980; Hendricks and Hendricks, 1981; Kraft and Osterbind, 1981) strongly suggested that these Silver Hairs were generally better educated, had had more prestigious occupations, and had higher incomes than most older Americans and most older



Floridians. Additionally, these data supported the Experiential Learning Model. They are not to be construed to mean, however, that the Silver Hairs were not or are not representative of the larger elderly population. One need only look at the socioeconomic traits of the members of the U.S. Congress or any state legislature. Americans elect representatives who possess similar characteristics, presumably characteristics that are superior to those of the general population.

The status variable was then cross tabulated with other characteristics of the model. Table 13 is a composite table. In view of the high degree of similarity among the Silver Hairs, basic statistics such as chi square were not deemed valid even after the variables were dichotomized as follows:

Health—considered as above average or average for age with no self-reported illness or health handicap.

Leadership—having at least two leadership positions in the community such as president, secretary, and board member.

Prior community role and present community role—the two roles were coded the same. The roles were considered present if the respondent reported he or she was a decision maker, consciousness raiser, or contributor; the prior role was a retrospective reporting of the role before SHL involvement.

Times monthly activities—the individual was obligated for at least four monthly meetings.

Civic attitude—those self-characterized as other-directed and who considered serving others in their communities as a social obligation.



Table 13

Cross Tabulations of the Status Index with the Experiential Learning Model Characteristics

Status		Health		Leadership positions		Prior community role		Community role		Civic attitude		Times monthly activity	
Score	Term	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0	None	4	( 3.2)	3	( 2.8)	2	( 1.8)	3	( 2.6)	3	( 2.6)	2	( 2.1)
1	Low	6	( 4.8)	5	( 4.7)	5	( 4.6)	6	( 4.4)	6	( 4.4)	4	( 4.3)
2	Med.	25	(20.2)	17	(16.0)	19	(17.4)	20	(17.0)	23	(20.0)	20	(21.3)
3	High	89	(71.8)	81	(76.4)	83	(76.2)	89	(75.4)	89	(73.0)	68	(72.3)
Total		126		126		109		118		121		94	



After these data were fitted to the Experiential Learning Model, the model was composed of characteristics such as advanced education, which can lead to high status occupations with above average incomes. These characteristics were reported by the Silver Hairs, who also considered the state of their health to be better than average. When these traits are accompanied by the attitude of civic mindedness, which includes a willingness to serve or improve one's community, a desire to be involved in the community, and/or a feeling of responsibility to the community, the individual is likely to participate in local voluntary associations. The associations are varied and can be social, civic, professional, political, or service in nature.

Within voluntary organizations rewards encourage commitment. If the individual receives satisfaction or at least the absence of negative experiences, he continues in an active manner and often receives an opportunity for leadership. Numerous skills are learned and talents are discovered in expressing leadership capabilities. However, the leadership type has no arena to advance beyond this level of community involvement. Some associations provide district positions, but, unless a career choice is contemplated, the leadership roles are often relinquished for what Rosow (1973) describes as informal roles. The informal roles function without the sanction of an office but maintain status within the group. Examples of such roles are advisor, confidant, and power broker. When a specific task develops, the informal leaders are called upon for their expertise. A number of Silver Hairs who were interviewed reported high involvement in groups whose leadership positions they once occupied. Essentially, there was no other



office to be sought, so their roles were unofficial, but they were frequently consulted for information and asked for assistance.

The SHL as an opportunity structure creates formal roles and tasks for persons whose previous experiences have made them ideally suited for SHL-type roles. These persons may not mobilize the community or advocate mass movements but they are willing to participate within a structure to serve the common good if it is made available to them. They have the confidence of their communities and the abilities to represent them. Their learned skills are applied to the new opportunity structure's demands. Were it not for the opportunity structure, the talents might become dormant. The SHL fosters a political commitment and expands former opportunities for its members to become recognized advocates for their cohorts. Within the structure of the SHL, a group consciousness and solidarity develops. These developments are necessary for group action to take place (Streib, 1976). The consciousness and solidarity are mobilized not because of age or class factors but because of the realization by the elderly that the aged have common concerns stimulated by the SHL. These concerns motivate the Silver Hairs either to increase their political activities or to add a political dimension to their current community activities. The Silver Hairs, as leaders in the community, are effective in communicating and in organizing their local constituents to increased political activities.

#### Summary

This exploratory study has been primarily descriptive with hypotheses developed as a mechanism for organizing the data. All of the



seven hypotheses were rejected in favor of alternative hypotheses. The data demonstrate the SHL program in Florida to be an effective self-advocacy program for the concerns of the aged. The Silver Hairs are representative of the elderly and present political demands to elected officials that are perceived to be realistic with demonstrated successes. The SHL is an opportunity structure which expands the range of political involvement by the elderly and thus provides a special status to the elderly. With the advent of such opportunity structures for the elderly, the politics of aging has entered a new era. The SHL experience in Florida and elsewhere has stimulated diffusion of the idea to other states.

Issues not formalized as hypotheses were also presented and discussed. The objectives were intended to be broad and general in nature and were tentative insights or conclusions drawn from the research experience about the SHL concept. The ideas should generate further thinking on the subject as well as review additional and relevant data.

Finally, this chapter offered evidence to support the Experiential Learning Model developed during the research. The testing of this model is expected to continue. Only in future application of the model in research specifically designed to test it will the model's potential be determined. However, this is an expectation of the alternative grounded theory approach utilized in this study. For now, the data do not allow for rejection of the model, and the model does describe the behavior of the modal type of Silver Hair who participated in the 1980 Florida Silver Haired Legislature in Florida.



## CHAPTER IX CONCLUSIONS

### Introduction

Florida has sometimes been referred to as a gerontological research laboratory. This statement is true to the extent that Florida's elderly population, almost 25 percent over the age of 60, resembles now what demographers predict for the nation in the future. Because of its appeal for retirement living, mass immigrations of elderly persons into the state have created a senior citizen population which also has the health, education, occupation, and financial characteristics of future aged cohorts. Therefore, conclusions and generalizations drawn from this research are applicable to other states in the country, although the reader should not overextend the comparison and be mindful of Goode's (1969:337) warning: "To suggest which data will be most significant is to assume the mantle of prophet."

Two trends appear to be incubating in the United States: (1) the elderly are increasingly advocating their own interests and (2) advocacy at the state level is becoming more important since the federal government focused its attention on states' rights. This exploratory study of the Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) expands the limited knowledge of the politics of the elderly with empirical data of a practical alternative for advocacy.



Included in this chapter are a discussion of questions summarized in the review of the literature but not specifically tested, generalizations derived from the research, an evaluation of the role of the SHL in the advocacy process, and outlines for possible future research.

### Discussion of Earlier Questions

Several questions were generated in the review of the literature. While these questions are dealt with here, the discussion is couched in data which were not specifically designed to answer them.

Do advocacy innovations have potential? Yes, but the full impact is not known. Earlier research offered a pessimistic view for the results of advocacy by the elderly. The empirical data from this research point to numerous successes of an advocacy innovation which is the basis for increased optimism for future advocacy forms and should serve as an example for others to test innovative ideas.

Are the demands of the elderly too heterogeneous and unrealistic for a cohesive action? Whether or not a wide range of different demands are presented to the SHL as prefiled bills, the SHL organization and structure encourages homogeneity on the issues. In the 1980 SHL session, 100 prefiled bills were presented and 12 were passed as priority bills. These 12 bills represented six issues: five dealt with health services; two with crime; two with health costs; and three with rental rates, mandatory retirement, and utility rates. The Silver Hairs take pride in offering realistic legislation, that is, legislation addressing practical issues with probable solutions. To offer other legislation would jeopardize the regard given the SHL by appointed and elected state officials.



Does the lack of group identity impede advocacy? This question was not fully explained by the data. Mass movement and minority group literature has often cited group identity as necessary for political action; most successful advocacy groups, however, rely on the cohesion of a small group of individuals to articulate their interests. The SHL provides an innovative linkage between the legislative process and the local population of the elderly. Thus, this research indicates that a high level of group identity is not necessary when an effective opportunity to advocate is available.

Do organizations provide the link between the individual and government? This study found that elderly individuals who act politically have organizational ties in their communities. It is apparent that these community organizations not only serve as a learning environment for individuals to acquire skills and knowledge for political activity but also as a means to mobilize support for Silver Hairs by their votes, signatures on petitions, suggestions for legislation, and dissemination of information. It is acknowledged that not all elderly persons are involved with organizations but that organizations can link individuals to government, or at least serve as an information, education, and mobilization source for those who participate.

If the elderly have lacked the necessary skills, resources, knowledge, organizations, and opportunities for advocacy, what conditions can change these limitations? As previously noted, the SHL is considered to be an opportunity structure that offers the elderly an alternative for political activity and the experience to learn political strategies and practice the skills of advocacy. Two major conditions



have fostered the SHL concept in Florida: (1) State officials in the executive branch of government deemed it appropriate to use public funds and provide a support staff to institute the SHL. It is unlikely that a SHL would be adopted in a state without a strong commitment to provide funding and supportive services. In order for a SHL to thrive, state officials must be visionary and view such a mechanism for self-advocacy by the elderly as necessary. (2) An accepting political environment, particularly by state legislators who perceive a need for the elderly to have an impact on the decision making process, is important to the SHL concept.

Can the elderly participate effectively in the American political process? The key word in this question is effectively, which is difficult to operationalize. One can arbitrarily assume that the success of the outcomes and perceptions of the reactors in the political process is a measure of effectiveness. The percentage of legislative priorities becoming law offers evidence for successful outcomes. Also, the perceptions of state legislators who expressed knowledge of the SHL and considered it effective infer further that this question is to be answered in the affirmative.

What are the individual characteristics of those persons who participate in an effective organization? Chapter VI dealt with this question. In general, individuals who have higher levels of health, income, and education than their cohorts, combined with the desire to serve their communities and/or improve the quality of life, tend to become active in a SHL-type group. Such individuals also have been active in community organizations and have exhibited leadership qualities in official capacities in these organizations.



Advocacy occurs for what segments of the elderly? The Silver Hairs did not perceive themselves as representing any particular constituency. Most Silver Hairs believed that they served either all of the state's elderly or those in their local geographical area. They indicated personal interest in a variety of issues, such as health, income, housing, and education, which may affect some of them more than others, but the concentration of interest in these areas was so small that it was considered negligible.

Are the elderly capable of advocating their own needs? The information gathered in this research does not offer an answer to this question. A more general question is, Should the elderly have an advocate? in our pluralistic political system, we answer yes. Who the advocate should be is yet another question. Should it be professional groups, concerned groups, trade groups, the elderly themselves, some other group, or a combination? Certainly one can offer the philosophical conclusion that the elderly should be a part of the process; whether they must be is an unresolved question.

### Generalizations

The major conclusion of this dissertation is that the Silver Haired Legislature is acknowledged as serving a legitimate role in determining policies and programs for the elderly in the state of Florida. The analysis of the SHL in this study has had four major foci: (1) the organization of the SHL, (2) the participation of the SHL legislators, (3) the attitudes of the state legislators, and (4) the efficacy of the elderly.



The organization of the SHL was described in Chapter V. Its format attracts elderly persons who are considered leaders in their communities because these persons consider the opportunity structure offered by the SHL to be attractive and viable. The State Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS), part of the executive branch of government, maintains a dominant role in the SHL by monitoring its activities, from planning the election process to the passage of legislation. Thus, the state can alter the outcomes of the SHL if it chooses. The current coordinator of the SHL, however, disassociates herself from the decision-making processes and concentrates on the structural aspects of organization.

An important reason for Florida's SHL success is the method by which Silver Hairs are elected. Frequently, when government agencies or commissions seek "client" involvement, they appoint representatives to serve as liaisons with the constituency. In the SHL, it is the elderly who select their representatives. In essence, because the state organizes the election of Silver Hairs, it relinquishes a powerful tool for controlling the outcomes of the SHL. The Silver Hairs, in turn, must gauge their responsibility by weighing information, demands, their actions, and the consequences of their behavior among their constituencies and its receptivity by the state officials who have the power to legislate and administer action desired by the elderly. This organizational process draws upon many talents which vary with the election of Silver Hairs and the SHL leadership.

The final disposition of the SHL's goals rests with the abilities of the SHL members and the future development of the SHL. Blumer



(1971) cautions our judgments by stating that the character of an organization is affected by the age and career of the organization. In fact, some leaders of the 1980 SHL were less than enthusiastic about the SHL's capabilities and their dedication to the SHL's goals.

The situational determinants of Florida and other states who adopt the concept will alter outcomes. Political philosophies, budget constraints, priority agenda, and catastrophies, along with other determinants, will affect advocacy processes. The high success rate in terms of the percentage of SHL bills passed into law should not be expected to hold constant. Conversations with advocates indicate that more issues are expected to fail than to succeed but that any successes improve the situation when compared to no advocacy at all.

The ultimate question is, Does the advocacy program have an impact? The Silver Hairs have had an impact on decision makers who are aware of their interests and on the mobilization of the local elderly constituency. Of course, there is a wide range of variance within these impacted groups which is explained by the differences between individual Silver Hairs. In the opinion of the researcher, SHL successes have been inordinately high and, thus, future expectations will be lower. But the efforts of the Silver Hairs in advocating legislation are encouraging. The state legislature can bring about significant advances for the aged because it is in a position to indulge a particular population, such as the elderly (Hudson and Veley, 1974).

A broader generalization of this study is the confirmation of a successful self-advocacy program by the elderly. One can argue the



interpretation of success, but the passage of legislation and the increased visibility of the elderly's concerns cannot be negated. The visibility of the SHL could be improved if the Florida media would give the SHL more coverage. Many news releases distributed by the state HRS information officer have not been utilized by the media, though local news in smaller communities and newspapers circulated in areas with high densities of the elderly have focused on the SHL. According to Dauer and St. Angelo (1980), the media of Florida are a strong influence on public opinion in the state. Public relations efforts would enhance the SHL, but they have not been a high priority of either the state coordinator or the Silver Hairs. As the SHL concept develops, the communication role is expected to be an integral part of the agenda.

The future of the SHL depends on the funding of the concept. It is unrealistic to expect federal monies ad infinitum to sponsor the SHL. The state legislature, as determined by this study does not favor state expenditures for the SHL. A mechanism needs to be created to obtain funds for the SHL. Since the 1981 SHL will be composed of almost all new members, both the media and fund-raiser roles are suggested for the present nebulous role of Silver Hair emeriti. A combination of funding sources will ensure the continued institutionalization of the SHL concept.

The concept of the opportunity structure posited throughout this study has been demonstrated to be functional. Different from the mass movement perspectives and other earlier studies of advocacy by the aged, the opportunity structure offers an explanation that assumes an expansion of the choice process from a particular range of



alternatives. The mass movement perspective and studies of advocacy by the aged attempted to explain the origin and rationales of new alternatives. In this study, the definition of opportunity structure considers the alternative as a social fact.

Pinner et al. (1959) noted three characteristics necessary for an organization to be capable of effecting changes in the political world: commitment, interpersonal experiences, and rationality. The SHL is an organization which debates concerns while offering rational solutions that are acceptable to officials. It attracts individuals who have accumulated a number of interpersonal experiences which have been tested in political-type situations, and the SHL successes are a result of the commitment of its members who have dedicated much time and effort. However, a crucial element, not listed by Pinner et al., is the accepting environment created by decision makers for the organization. This latter characteristic is the opportunity structure. We are convinced that other organizations which were unsuccessful had the first three elements. In the example of Florida's SHL, one can intuitively deduce that at least some success by the SHL is attributed to the support of the SHL by the executive and legislative branches of government. It is assumed that this support contains a preconceived notion that some percentage of the SHL's priority bills should become part of state statute; otherwise, why continue the support?

The recent limitation on the term a Silver Hair can serve is predicted to limit the productivity of the SHL. Instead of Silver Hairs beginning their session with sufficient expertise from prior sessions to act on prefiled bills, considerable time will be spent getting



organized. The constant turnover of Silver Hairs will also prevent a continuous building of a network on which the SHL can rely for support. These matters could be bridged if former Silver Hairs were to remain active in the SHL, but this is not predicted unless the state creates a formal role with specific tasks. It is assumed that the state HRS office will not formulate this role in order that its credibility with the state legislature not be harmed. The legislative branch will not continue to cooperate with the executive branch if the latter continues to push and prod it with interest groups. The SHL, however, is not an issue-oriented group but rather a social structure that can address a wide set of issues. This organization can endure as a continuing force in Florida politics unless it has limitations placed on it.

A final generalization derived from this research is that state-level decision makers perceive the elderly to have common experiences, common problems, and common interests that are shared. For these decision makers, the SHL concept is a more practical alternative than other forms of interest group activity that are without state influence. Besides, now that the SHL is functioning and formalized, it is not politically expedient to ignore it.

In sum, this exploratory study offers evidence to challenge those gerontologists (Binstock, 1972, 1974; Cameron, 1974; Campbell, 1971) who argued that the elderly will not gain any political influence. Among their reasons were a divergence of interest, lack of identity, improved standards of living, life-long political identities, and a lack of agreement by the elderly. These scholars did not foresee the state becoming involved in coordinating advocacy for the elderly. On the



other hand, the reasons other researchers (Bulter, 1974; Peterson et al., 1976; Regan and Dowd, 1974) suggested for increases in political power by the aged were not all substantiated. Neither recent numerical increases of the elderly nor increased homogeneity nor age segregation among Florida's elderly is concluded to be the cause for the SHL's success. Engagement in political activity such as the SHL is best explained by the Experiential Learning Model, previously discussed, which relied on individual capabilities, community ties, and, most importantly, the opportunity structure.

In sociological terms, the Experiential Learning Model approximates a middle range theory. It is an incumbent task of the sociologist to conceptualize human behavior as occurring on several levels. This exploratory study has advanced this task by offering the Experiential Learning Model. Characteristics enumerated from phenomena associated with individuals were combined with macrolevel phenomena. This sociology of aging demonstrates that findings from social systems, in this case the opportunity structure, are rewarding. The findings provide concrete facts which can be used to alter behavior. Simply put, the opportunity structure presented by the Silver Haired Legislature encouraged the elderly as a group to respond differently to their social environment. The behavior of the elderly likewise affected the social environment. This conclusion is rooted in the sociological tradition known as structuralism. But this Experiential Learning Model has furthered the tradition by offering an explanation of the process by which the social structure shapes the political participatory behavior of the elderly in Florida. Thus, a dualism is inherent in this combination of microlevel and macrolevel analysis.



It is expected that continued research and documentation of this study will permit higher-order generalizations. In turn, these generalizations will permit deductions about the elderly. This is the continuing aim of the efforts which were begun in a modified form of the grounded theory approach developed by sociologists.

### Type of Advocacy

The SHL can be considered an effective advocacy organization for the elderly. A significant proportion of the SHL's goals were realized, and state leaders acknowledged the SHL as serving a legitimate role in determining policies and programs for the elderly. It is difficult to determine which measures of advocacy are really meaningful as opposed to being merely perfunctory. Selznick (1966) distinguished between substantive participation and administrative involvement. His distinction can be summarized as the distinction between participation that is significant, in the sense of making a difference in the outcome of decision making, and participation that is merely superficial, providing the illusion rather than the reality of significant participation in decision making. Officials of organizations such as the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, its division of Aging and Adult Services, and the Florida State Legislature have constraints which limit the degree of flexibility that they can employ. They must be assured that such political participation as exemplified by the SHL contributes to their organization's viability and to the security of their own position in it. In short, they must keep the upper hand.

Hence, Warren et al. (1974) maintain that citizen participation comes to be the juncture of two diverse sets of goals and constraints,



in this case, those of state officials and those of the elderly. This divergence can be understood in two sets of dynamics—citizen action and citizen involvement. Citizen action would be an effort by the elderly to influence the state to give first priority to the needs and wishes of the elderly, as defined by the elderly, and to consider as secondary the constraints of state organization rationales.

Citizen involvement would be the orderly, channeled input into state decision making by the elderly. The decisions are constrained by the viability needs of the state and by its technical, administrative, and institutionalized rationale. Participation by the elderly in a state-supported program implies an acceptance of these circumstances and a willingness to work within them.

Warren et al. differentiated among these aspects in part through the following characteristics: The objective of citizen action would be for the state to give first priority to the elderly's self-advocated needs and interests. The thrust is conflict where the status of the citizens would be that of adversaries demanding their rights. The orientation toward professionals and technology is hostile and the success of this citizen participation is gauged by fulfilling the objective of turning the state around to meet the needs of the aged as a priority.

Citizen involvement, on the other hand, has the following set of characteristics: The objective of citizen involvement would be for the SHL to give first priority to the technical, administrative, and institutional rationale of the state by constraining the SHL's goals and meeting the expressed needs and wishes of the elderly by actions



that are compatible with these first priorities. The thrust is cooperation, with the status of citizen participation being that of clients. Technologies and professionals are considered to be solutions, and success is gauged by making services more effective without major inconvenience or jeopardizing the state's rationale or viability.

Estes (1975) applied this dichotomy of participation as developed by Warren and his associates to the aged. Estes favored the citizen action role because this role culminates with the increase of political power, which can change the system to reflect more accurately the needs and demands of the participants.

The conclusion of this study is that the SHL reflects Selznick's term of substantive participation because the results of the SHL have an effect on decision making. However, regarding Warren et al.'s conceptualization, the SHL can be viewed as neither citizen involvement nor citizen action. If placed on a continuum between these two extremes, the SHL would resemble the citizen involvement type more frequently but would also possess the capabilities to perform as a citizen action group. In fact, this is a strength of the concept. The assumption is that some issues arise in which these different approaches are in conflict with each other. Agencies and organizations attempt to control the participating citizens and to channel their inputs into acceptable forms, and the citizens attempt to control the agencies and organizations so that their activities more adequately meet citizen needs and wishes. The tension resulting from these goals is always present in citizen participation; however, at times it is minimal and at other times it is dramatic.



### Future Research

As a direct result of this exploratory investigation of the SHL concept, three research projects have been generated for future endeavors. Several times throughout this dissertation the SHL has been referred to as a developing or continuing concept. It was noted that since 1978, the initial convening year, several changes in its organization and its function have been made. Therefore, the first project is to continue the data gathering about the evolvement of the SHL in Florida. Both state personnel and SHL leaders have expressed a desire to work diligently to codify the SHL program. Thus, it is expected that the next few years will determine the permanence for this advocacy group: whether it will be institutionalized, have public or private funding or some combination of funding, expand or diminish its goals and expectations, and/or alter its role and successes. Continued contact with confidants has been arranged and the additional data should augment the findings of this study. The new information will also determine whether Estes was correct when she projected that the citizen-involvement advocacy group is the pattern lobbyist for the aged will most likely follow.

The second research project has been drafted and is in the process of revision for submission for funding. A minor aspect of this dissertation was to identify states that had either adopted or were considering adopting the SHL concept. This case study of Florida's SHL will serve as baseline data, and the experience of this investigation will be incorporated into the development of a comparative study of SHLs throughout the United States.



The different levels of effectiveness, funding sources, reasons for adoption, organizational structures and related processes, and outcomes will be compared. This second research project will also compare the expectations of sponsoring groups when identifying their reasons for SHL involvement. These intentions are difficult to operationalize, but it is important to know if the purposes are advocacy for the elderly and, if so, to what degree of seriousness. Would these SHLs merely be exercises in tokenism or strong efforts in advocacy by the aged, or would the SHLs lie somewhere between these extremes? Of course, the model developed in this study will be tested further. Since little research and few publications have appeared on the SHL, this latter project will elucidate the influential sources for new ideas in the aging network. As an incentive to participate, a workshop composed of coordinators of all SHLs is planned. Little, if any, face-to-face contact between these coordinators has been made, and a national workshop is expected to be beneficial.

The third project is less developed at this time. Responses from the 50 states rendered a surprising result—that all 50 states were familiar with the SHL concept. Several states reported that they had previously considered adopting the SHL concept but chose another alternative. Other states had developed new innovations for advocacy by the elderly, for example, statewide congresses and legislative/advocacy sessions. Some states included information about their programs, describing them as having a more effective format for advocacy than that of the SHL. The Older Americans Act regulations have encouraged the states to develop advocacy programs, and the assumption is that each



state has some kind of program. Consequently, the third project would involve an investigation of the advocacy models of all the states, would categorize them, and then would compare them. Essentially, this investigation would seek to identify the most advantageous system for various social systems within states. The situation determinants of each state will be a primary focus of the study. A study of social inventions, as outlined by Whyte (1980), will be utilized. Whyte suggests that sociologists can increase their contribution by discovering new and apparently promising strategies (social inventions), studying them in the field, evaluating their effectiveness, and attempting to discover the theoretical principles underlying the success or failure of the inventions.

Advocacy by the elderly at the state level is becoming entrenched in the American system. Social researchers are becoming aware of their neglect of this research problem. The author is aware of two studies on advocacy currently underway, one in a midwestern state, the other in a far western state. With growing interest and completion of at least the known research in progress and the planned studies herein described, it is hoped that sufficient data will be available to re-evaluate the current thinking and begin the task of theory construction—which is a future aim of this researcher.



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APPENDIX A  
LETTERS TO SILVER HAIREB LEGISLATORS



Initial Letter

Center for Gerontological Studies  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, Florida

2230 N.W. 54th Terrace  
Gainesville, Florida 32605  
Phone: 904-376-4299  
July 21, 1980

Dear Silver Haired Legislator:

The State of Florida conducts its third Silver Haired Legislature next week, and I shall be in attendance to observe and, hopefully, to talk with you about the proceedings. I have been involved with aging since 1971, am an Assistant Professor of Sociology (on leave) at Rio Grande College in Ohio, and am currently studying for a Ph.D. degree at the University of Florida.

Since the Silver Haired Legislature continues to experience success and to expand into other states, I have chosen for my dissertation topic "The Politics of Aging in Florida: A Case Study of the Silver Haired Legislature." My research project will be the first academic study of the Silver Haired Legislature, and, thus, your cooperation will be an important and vital contribution to this endeavor. I have already spoken with several Silver Haired legislators, staff members of the HRS's Aging and Adult Services Program Office, and other senior citizens about this proposed study of the Silver Haired Legislature.

My purpose next week will be to increase my knowledge about the Silver Haired Legislature. I hope that this letter will serve as an introduction for me and that you will share your knowledge and experiences with me. I cannot meet all of you personally because you will be busy with the important matters of the day and time is short. Therefore, some time in August I shall mail to you a questionnaire to receive the benefit of your knowledge. This questionnaire is important for my information gathering, and the results will be beneficial to those involved with the Silver Haired Legislature.

I am looking forward to meeting you, and I wish you much success in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

Raymond C. Matura



Cover Letter of First Mailing

Center for Gerontological Studies  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, Florida

August 29, 1980

Dear Silver Haired Legislator:

As you may recall from my previous correspondence, I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Florida and am conducting research on the Silver Haired Legislature. Formal permission has been secured from the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS). The State of Florida and you as participants have been selected for this study because of the unique leadership expressed through the Silver Haired Legislature. Many of you whom I have had opportunity to meet have been extremely helpful, and I am deeply grateful.

In order to complete the study, your cooperation is of the utmost necessity. Please complete the enclosed questionnaire at your earliest convenience. The questionnaire will take approximately one hour of your time. Each question is important and the success of the research depends on your response. Please answer all questions to the best of your ability. If a question cannot be answered completely, an approximation will suffice. I promise that all responses and respondents will be anonymous. A stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

If you would like to be contacted for further information or would like to make additional comments, please feel free to contact me under a separate mailing in order to maintain your anonymity.

Once again, please complete the questionnaire as soon as you can. Although we have all been bothered by endless surveys in our mail, this questionnaire can only be answered by 160 special persons from the entire population of the United States of America, and will have an impact on planning for your fellow senior citizens.

Many thanks for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Raymond C. Matura  
2230 N.W. 54th Terrace  
Gainesville, FL 32605  
(904) 376-4299



Cover Letter of Second Mailing

Center for Gerontological Studies  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, Florida

September 26, 1980

Dear Silver Haired Legislator:

A couple of weeks ago I sent you a questionnaire with the request that you take the time from your busy schedule to fill it out and return it to me in the self-addressed, stamped envelope enclosed for that purpose. It is possible that you have already returned it. If so, please disregard this follow-up letter and accept my thanks for helping collect information about the Florida Silver Haired Legislature and legislators. If you have not yet had the opportunity to fill out this questionnaire, I hope you will find the time to do so.

There is very little written about the Silver Haired Legislature concept. As a consequence, there is a vital need to collect the data sought in the questionnaire. In order to do this, it is important to gather as much information as possible. It is essential to the success of this research that we have a high return rate of questionnaires.

Enclosed is a duplicate copy of the original mailing sent to you. Please do not fill it out if you have already mailed the first copy to me. All respondents are guaranteed anonymity. If you have any questions about this research or filling out the questionnaire, please call me at 904-376-4299.

In closing, I should like to thank you for your cooperation, and I look forward to receiving your completed questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Raymond C. Matura



Cover Letter of Third Mailing

Center for Gerontological Studies  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, Florida

October 16, 1980

Dear Silver Haired Legislator:

As you may recall, I am conducting research on the Florida Silver Haired Legislature. Questionnaires have been sent to all Silver Haired legislators and the response has been very good. To date, approximately seventy-seven percent have returned the completed survey. I wish to express my thanks to those of you who have been so cooperative and to the many of you who have given additional support, information, and encouragement.

Shortly, I shall begin to analyze the data. If you intended to fill out the questionnaire but delayed it for any number of reasons, I encourage you to do so within the next week. If you have misplaced the questionnaire, please contact me and I shall mail you another.

Once again, I thank you for your cooperation, and I trust that the research will prove valuable to those concerned with the Silver Haired Legislature and the elderly.

Sincerely,

Raymond C. Matura  
2230 N.W. 54th Terrace  
Gainesville, Florida 32605  
Phone: 904-376-4299



Sponsor Letter

Dear Silver Haired Legislator:

We, the undersigned, wish to express our support for the research undertaken by Raymond C. Matura. The enclosed questionnaire is an important aspect of the research and it is vital that you cooperate if the results are to be considered valid. We encourage you to complete the questions to the best of your ability and keep in mind that all responses are strictly confidential. If the State of Florida is to maintain its continued leadership of the Silver Haired Legislature concept, it behoves us to have the idea researched and our signatures attest to our confidence in Mr. Matura's ability to perform this important task.

Sincerely,

---

Vern Jansen  
Speaker of the House  
Silver Haired Legislature

---

Benton Lowe  
President of the Senate  
Silver Haired Legislature

---

Joyce Jenkins  
Coordinator, Silver Haired  
Legislature Department of HRS

---

Gordon F. Streib, Ph.D.  
Graduate Research Professor  
Center for Gerontology Programs  
University of Florida



APPENDIX B  
QUESTIONNAIRE TO SILVER HAired LEGISLATORS



SURVEY OF THE 1980 SILVER HAired LEGISLATURE

I. This first section is designed to collect BACKGROUND information about each member. Remember, all the information is STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL and your responses are ANONYMOUS. Your cooperation to answer ALL questions is very important.

1. What is your present age? \_\_\_\_\_ years old.
2. Where were you born? City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_  
Country \_\_\_\_\_
3. Where have you resided the longest? \_\_\_\_\_  
For how many years? \_\_\_\_\_ years.
4. What is your sex? \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female
5. What is your present marital status?  
☐ Married ☐ Never Married ☐ Single  
☐ Widowed ☐ Divorced ☐ Separated
6. How many years have you been a resident of Florida? \_\_\_\_\_ years.
7. Are you presently employed?  
☐ No ☐ Yes -----(a)What kind of job? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_(b)Full Time ☐ or Part Time ☐
8. What was your main full-time occupation during your work career?  
(a) \_\_\_\_\_  
(b) In what type of business or industry were you employed? (e.g.  
Sears, State of Florida, Publix Supermarkets, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What was the occupation of your spouse? \_\_\_\_\_



10. Do you presently reside in

- ☐ Own Home    ☐ Rental House    ☐ Apartment    ☐ Condominium  
☐ Mobile Home    ☐ Residential Facility    ☐ Nursing Home  
☐ Relative's Home    ☐ Friend's Home    ☐ Other; Please

Specify. \_\_\_\_\_

11. Please indicate the number and type of individuals who live with you (please check as many as are applicable).

- ☐ No One    ☐ Spouse    ☐ Children    ☐ Grandchildren  
☐ Parents    ☐ Other Relatives    ☐ Friends  
☐ Others; Please Specify. \_\_\_\_\_

12. Do you consider yourself

- ☐ Young    ☐ Middle Aged    ☐ Late Middle Aged  
☐ Young Old Age    ☐ Old Old Age

13. How many years of formal education do you have? \_\_\_\_\_ years.

14. What is your highest degree?

- ☐ Elementary Diploma    ☐ Four-Year College Degree  
☐ High School Diploma    ☐ Graduate Degree  
☐ Two-Year College Degree    ☐ None of the Above  
☐ Other; Please Specify. \_\_\_\_\_

15. Compared with others your age, would you say your health is

- ☐ Better Than Average    ☐ Above Average  
☐ Worse Than Average    ☐ Don't Know

16. Could you please list the clubs, groups, or organizations in which you regularly participate, the numbers of activities attended each month, and any positions of leadership or responsibility held?

Activity	Times Per Month	Position
----------	-----------------	----------

A. \_\_\_\_\_

(Continued, next page)



Activity	Times per Month	Position
B. _____		
C. _____		
D. _____		
E. _____		

Please use the back side of this page for additional space if needed.

17. Compared to others your age, do you think that your income is

☐ Better      ☐ Same      ☐ Worse

18. Compared to when you were age 55, do you think that your income is

☐ Better      ☐ Same      ☐ Worse

19. Do you receive regular income from the following sources? (Please check as many as are applicable.)

☐ Social Security      ☐ Savings      ☐ Pension  
☐ Stocks      ☐ Wages and Salaries      ☐ Other; Please

Specify. \_\_\_\_\_

20. Keeping in mind that all of this information is strictly confidential, would you please estimate your monthly income?

\_\_\_\_\_ Per Month      ☐ Don't Know      ☐ Refuse

- II. Now we turn our attention to some GENERAL INFORMATION concerning the elderly.

21. What are the most important groups and persons in Florida working on behalf of the elderly?

A. \_\_\_\_\_ B. \_\_\_\_\_  
C. \_\_\_\_\_ D. \_\_\_\_\_  
E. \_\_\_\_\_

Please use the back side of this page for others.

22. What are your sources of information about the situation of the elderly?  
(Answer on next page.)



- A. \_\_\_\_\_ B. \_\_\_\_\_  
 C. \_\_\_\_\_ D. \_\_\_\_\_

23. How much respect do you have for professional politicians?

- ☐ Very High      ☐ High      ☐ Moderate      ☐ Low  
☐ Very Low      ☐ None

24. What do you consider to be the most pressing problems of all age groups?

- A. \_\_\_\_\_ B. \_\_\_\_\_  
 C. \_\_\_\_\_ D. \_\_\_\_\_  
 E. \_\_\_\_\_ F. \_\_\_\_\_

25. What do you consider to be the most pressing problems of the elderly?

	No Problem	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Most Important
A. Age Discrimination				
B. Crime				
C. Emotional Problems				
D. Employment Opportunities				
E. Education				
F. Health Care				
G. Housing				
H. Income (Money)				
I. Legal Aid				
J. Nutrition and Food				
K. Protection from Disaster				
L. Spare-Time Opportunities				

(Continued, next page)



	No Problem	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Most Important
M. Transporation				

N. Other; Specify. \_\_\_\_\_

III. Finally, some questions concentrating on your involvement with the SILVER HAired LEGISLATURE.

26. Did you learn about the Silver Haired Legislature through an

☐ Organization ☐ Friend ☐ Media

☐ Other; Specify. \_\_\_\_\_

27. Why did you become involved in the Silver Haired Legislature?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

28. Are you presently a ☐ Senator ☐ Representative

29. How did you get the 100 signatures on your petition?

\_\_\_\_\_

30. What important tasks have you accomplished as a member of the Silver Haired Legislature?

\_\_\_\_\_

31. Do you think that any group of the elderly was not represented by the SHL?

☐ No ☐ Yes; Specify. \_\_\_\_\_

32. Are any groups of the elderly population overly represented or favored in the SHL?

☐ No ☐ Yes; Specify. \_\_\_\_\_

33. What segment of the elderly population do you represent?

\_\_\_\_\_

34. Have any special interests, lobbyists, or individuals contacted you for support of particular legislation?

☐ No ☐ Yes; Please List Them. A. \_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_ C. \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please use back side of this sheet if needed.)



35. Do you plan to participate in any future Silver Haired Legislatures?  
☐ Yes      ☐ No; Why Not? \_\_\_\_\_
36. Please list those members of the SHL whom you consider to be most influential.  
 A. \_\_\_\_\_ B. \_\_\_\_\_  
 C. \_\_\_\_\_ D. \_\_\_\_\_  
 E. \_\_\_\_\_ F. \_\_\_\_\_
37. Have you ever submitted a bill to the Silver Haired Legislature?  
☐ Yes      ☐ No
38. Did you receive any assistance from anyone to prepare for your participation or bill writing?  
☐ No      ☐ Yes; From Whom? \_\_\_\_\_
39. Has your counterpart in the State Legislature ever contacted you or given assistance?  
☐ No      ☐ Yes; Explain. \_\_\_\_\_
40. Have you ever made a presentation, summary, or report to anyone or any group about the Silver Haired Legislature?  
☐ No      ☐ Yes; To Whom? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
41. Since age 60, do you feel that your ideas about social issues and those ideas of others in your age group have become  
☐ Similar      ☐ No change      ☐ Dissimilar      ☐ Don't Know
42. Have you become involved with any clubs, groups, or organizations since your participation in the Silver Haired Legislature?  
☐ No      ☐ Yes; Please Specify. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



43. Has your involvement in the Silver Haired Legislature encouraged any new political activities?
- ☐ No      ☐ Yes; Please Explain. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
44. How do you characterize your role in community affairs? (Please check only ONE.)
- ☐ Decision Maker      ☐ Active as a Consciousness Raiser
- ☐ Contributor to Decision Making      ☐ A Follower in the Community
- ☐ No Part in the Process
45. What was your role in community affairs prior to your involvement with the Silver Haired Legislature?
- ☐ Decision Maker      ☐ Active as a Consciousness Raiser
- ☐ Contributor to Decision Making      ☐ A Follower in the Community
- ☐ No Part in the Process
46. What future political plans have you made as a result of your association with the Silver Haired Legislature? Specifically, what are your political plans for the next 12 months?
- ☐ None
- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
47. Would you estimate the number of hours that you have spent on activities related to the Silver Haired Legislature in the past year?
- \_\_\_\_\_ hours
- ☐ No Response      ☐ Not a Member of the 1979 Silver Haired Legislature
48. Were you a member of any previous Silver Haired Legislatures?
- ☐ 1978      ☐ 1979      ☐ No



Thank you for your time and cooperation. Your participation in this project is of great value. If you wish to offer additional information, please feel free to send it or express your desire in a separate mailing with your phone number, and an attempt will be made to contact you.



APPENDIX C  
LETTERS TO STATE LEGISLATORS



First Cover Letter

Department of Sociology  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, Florida

October 22, 1980

Dear Legislator:

Currently I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Florida and am an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Rio Grande College, Ohio (on leave). My dissertation topic is "The Politics of Aging in Florida: A Case Study of the Silver Haired Legislature." Several states have sponsored Silver Haired Legislatures and others are considering sponsorship. The Silver Haired Legislature concept permits senior citizens to present and debate issues in a week-long session and then seek sponsorship for their priority legislative bills in the State Legislature.

My dissertation is the first study of the Silver Haired Legislature concept and your cooperation will be a very important contribution to this research. Several months of investigation, interviews, observation, as well as a questionnaire to the Silver Haired legislators, have been completed.

Please complete the enclosed questionnaire at your earliest convenience. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes of your time. I promise that all responses and respondents will be anonymous.

Once again, please complete the questionnaire as soon as you can. A self-addressed envelope is enclosed for convenience.

Many thanks for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Raymond C. Matura  
2230 N.W. 54th Terrace  
Gainesville, Florida 32605  
Phone: 904-4299



Second Cover Letter

Department of Sociology  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, Florida

November 12, 1980

Dear Legislator:

Two weeks ago I mailed you a copy of the enclosed questionnaire, and in my cover letter I explained my reasons for writing you. To refresh your memory, I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Florida and my dissertation topic is a case study of the Silver Haired Legislature. My study will be the first detailed, objective study of the Silver Haired Legislature.

A considerable amount of information has been gathered as a result of nearly a year of investigation. Your contribution and response is vital and will add an important ingredient to the study. Please complete the enclosed questionnaire at your earliest convenience. A self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience. It should only take a few minutes of your time and all results are anonymous.

If you have already returned the questionnaire, please accept my gratitude and disregard the enclosed questionnaire. Since anonymity is guaranteed, it is necessary to send a duplicate to all state legislators. The initial response has been good.

Once again, your cooperation is greatly appreciated. Many thanks for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Raymond C. Matura  
2230 N.W. 54th Terrace  
Gainesville, Florida 32605  
Phone: 904-376-4299



APPENDIX D  
QUESTIONNAIRE TO STATE LEGISLATORS



QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE 1980 FLORIDA STATE LEGISLATURE

1. Are you a member of the ☐ Senate ☐ House of Representatives
2. What is your level of familiarity with the Florida Silver Haired Legislature?  
☐ Extensive ☐ Moderate ☐ Very Little ☐ None at All
3. As an advocacy group, do you think that the Silver Haired Legislature is  
☐ Very Effective ☐ Moderately Effective ☐ Slightly Effective  
☐ Not Effective ☐ A Hinderance
4. Do you think that the Silver Haired Legislature should be continued?  
☐ No ---- Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Yes --- Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Should public monies be used to support the Silver Haired Legislature?  
☐ No ---- Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Yes --- Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Have you or your staff given support to any member(s) of the Silver Haired Legislature?  
☐ No ☐ Yes --- Please Specify. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you think that the Silver Haired Legislature gives the elderly an advantageous position in the legislative process?  
☐ No ☐ Yes --- Please Specify. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU for your time and cooperation. Your participation in this project has been of great value.

Additional information is welcomed; feel free to send your comments under a separate mailing in order to maintain the anonymity of this questionnaire. If you prefer to be contacted for further information, please notify me and I shall contact you.



APPENDIX E  
LETTERS TO STATE DIRECTORS



First Cover Letter

Department of Sociology  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, Florida

January 19, 1981

Dear Director:

Currently I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Florida. My dissertation is a case study of the Silver Haired Legislature in Florida. The Silver Haired Legislature concept permits senior citizens to present and debate issues in a mock legislative session and then seek sponsorship for their priority bills in the state legislature.

Missouri initiated the Silver Haired Legislature and several other states have either adopted or are planning to adopt the idea. In order to identify those states with an interest in a Silver Haired Legislature and to assess the concept's diffusion, a brief questionnaire is enclosed along with a self-addressed envelope for your convenience.

Your cooperation (or your designate's) is greatly appreciated. It is important to return the questionnaire even if your state has no interest in the concept.

Please feel free to enclose any additional information that you think is appropriate. Once again, thank you for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Raymond C. Matura  
2230 N.W. 54th Terrace  
Gainesville, Florida 32605  
Phone: 904-376-4299



Second Cover Letter

Department of Sociology  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, Florida

February 6, 1981

Dear Director:

Two weeks ago you should have received a copy of the enclosed letter and questionnaire. Your state is among the fifteen states which have yet to respond.

Perhaps the questionnaire has been lost or your busy schedule has prevented a response. In any case, I would appreciate your time and cooperation by responding to the enclosed questionnaire. The questionnaire should take less than three minutes to complete.

Again, thank you for your efforts in this matter.

Sincerely,

Raymond C. Matura



Third Cover Letter

Department of Sociology  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, Florida

March 2, 1981

Dear Director:

You should have received two prior requests but I understand the heavy burden of fulfilling every request. I am enclosing a copy of my original letter for your information. Also enclosed is a brief questionnaire. It should take only a moment to complete.

All but two states have returned the survey. For the sake of completeness, I would appreciate a response. A stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Your cooperation is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Raymond C. Matura



APPENDIX F  
QUESTIONNAIRE TO STATE DIRECTORS



# SILVER HAired LEGISLATURE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STATE OFFICES

1. This response is from the State of \_\_\_\_\_
2. Our state planners ( ☐ are, ☐ are not ) familiar with the Silver Haired Legislature concept.
3. Our state has ( ☐ no, ☐ the following ) plans for a Silver Haired Legislature.

NOTE: If your state has no plans for a Silver Haired Legislature, you need not continue with the questionnaire. Please return the questionnaire and accept my thanks.

4. The contact person for future correspondence pertinent to the planning of our Silver Haired Legislature is

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

5. Our state is in the following stages of planning a Silver Haired Legislature (please check all that apply).

☐ Preliminary investigation of the concept

☐ Developing the plan for presentation to the appropriate administration

☐ Approval for the plan has been granted

☐ Funds have been appropriated

☐ Funds are being sought

☐ The first Silver Haired Legislature in our state is planned for

\_\_\_\_\_

☐ The first Silver Haired Legislature was convened in our state on (date) \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU for your time and cooperation. If you wish to include additional information, please use the reverse side of this form or send it in a separate mailing.



APPENDIX G  
REVIEW FORM OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS,  
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



REVIEW FORM

University of Florida  
Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects

1. TITLE OF PROJECT: The Politics of Aging in Florida: A Case Study of the Silver Haired Legislature
2. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S): (Name, degree, title, dept., campus address & phone)  
  
Gordon F. Streib, Ph.D.; Graduate Research Professor, Dept. of Sociology—GPA 3113, ph. 392-0254
3. SUPERVISOR: (Name, campus address & phone) Raymond C. Matura, Doctoral Candidate, Dept. of Sociology, GPA 3111, home ph. 376-4299
4. DATES OF ENTIRE PROPOSED PROJECT PERIOD:

From: July, 1980 To: July, 1981

5. NAME OF FUNDING AGENCY: ADMINISTRATION ON AGING: The proposal is also the dissertation of R. Matura and will proceed without funding.

PLEASE EXPLAIN IN NON-TECHNICAL LANGUAGE NOS. 6, 7, & 8

6. PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES OF INVESTIGATION:

This research will describe and analyze the Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) in Florida as part of the political process. Residents over the age of 60 are elected from legislative districts to meet in the state capitol to present and debate legislation. This study will focus on the structure, process, and impact of the SHL in Florida and explore the diffusion of the concept throughout the United States.

The Silver Haired Legislature is considered a new form of opportunity structure in which older persons can develop new roles and relationships as part of the political life of the United States.

A number of research methods will be employed: an observation of the actual proceedings of the SHL, a survey of the SHL membership utilizing a structured, anonymous, questionnaire, interviews of the leadership and selected persons involved with the SHL, access to available documents and records, and a content analysis of the data. (The survey instruments have not been developed at this date.)

Information from this study will contribute to an evaluation of the SHL, demonstrate the ability of the elderly to advocate on their own behalf, describe an innovative strategy for political participation, and add to the knowledge necessary for conceptual development.

7. ANTICIPATED RISK AND/OR POTENTIAL BENEFITS: (If subject is "at risk," include steps taken to protect subject.)

According to the definition "Subject at risk" stated by this committee, the investigators do not consider any of the human subjects "at risk."



8. MANNER OF OBTAINING SUBJECTS, MONETARY COMPENSATION, AGE AND NUMBER OF SUBJECTS IN PROJECT:

The subjects are either members of the Silver Haired Legislature, former members, state personnel responsible for managing the SHL, or members of the Florida State Legislature and interest groups.

9. ATTACH A COMPLETED SAMPLE OF THE INFORMED CONSENT WHICH HAS BEEN PREPARED ACCORDING TO THE COMMITTEE GUIDELINES.

Waiver of the Informed Consent Form is hereby made since the study presents no more than minimal risk, is unlikely to cause embarrassment, and has scientific merit.

Please use other side or attachments when space on the form is insufficient.

Revised copy, May 11, 1979



## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Raymond Carl Matura was born on January 8, 1948, to William and Nell S. Matura of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he attended elementary and secondary parochial schools. After completing almost three years of undergraduate education at several Philadelphia colleges, he transferred to Rio Grande College (Ohio), where in 1971 he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts cum laude. He was offered the position of resident director, which he held until 1978. During the same year he enrolled in the graduate program at nearby Ohio University. Upon completion of the degree of Master of Arts with a major in sociology, he assumed the position of acting instructor at Rio Grande College. At this time he also became a consultant to the local Areawide Agency on Aging. After gaining tenure, advancing to the rank of assistant professor, and completing course work in aging at Miami University, The Ohio State University, the University of Southern California, and The Penn State University, he was granted a leave of absence to pursue his doctoral studies at the University of Florida. In August, 1982, he received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in sociology and emphasis on gerontology and the family.

Raymond Matura was married to Pamela Kay Black on June 7, 1975, She too completed a graduate degree at the University of Florida, receiving the degree of Master of Health Science with a major in

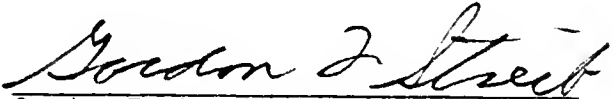


rehabilitative counseling. A daughter, Meagan Elise, was born on November 13, 1979.


The Matura family returned to Rio Grande College in the fall of 1981.



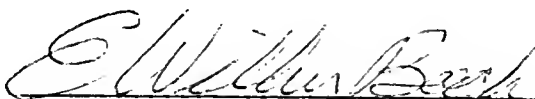
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
Gordon F. Streib, Chairman  
Graduate Research Professor of  
Sociology

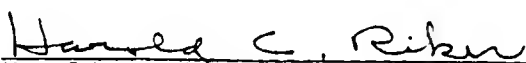
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
Felix M. Berardo  
Professor of Sociology

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
E. Wilbur Bock  
Professor of Sociology

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
Harold C. Riker  
Professor of Counselor Education



I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gerald R. Leslie  
Professor of Sociology

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Sociology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate Council, and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dean for Graduate Studies and Research



